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WHAT MOBILE

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July 2015

As we've discovered this month, the top smartphones now come VERY close to matching the quality of a proper DSLR camera. Even the last obstacle, swappable lenses, has been overcome with third-party companies such as Olloclip offering add-on lenses (at least for the iPhone).

The significance for society is quite profound. Millions of people are now walking around with a pro-quality camera and HD camcorder in their pocket ready to record any event in crystal-clear clarity and colour. However it is likely that the better photographs will still be taken by full-blown DSLR cameras.

Why? People who buy and use SLRs usually know an awful lot more than the average smartphone user when it comes to taking a memorable picture. They understand about how best to capture light. And capturing light is the first topic that any budding photographer learns about. Knowing how to take good photographs is a skill which takes study and practice.

Phone manufacturers have squeezed a vast amount of optical and processing power into their latest camera phones. But even an LG G4, judged by us to be the cream of the crop, will not turn you into a David Bailey or John Rankin Waddell. It will however give you the chance to use your expensive new mobile to create hundreds of happy snaps to a technical standard undreamed of in phones just two years ago. Whether or not they will be good enough to hang in a photo exhibition is of course another matter.

The What Mobile team

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Our friends at JCB have kindly given us two JCB Bluetooth Speakers to give away. Sound quality is fantastic and you can play music either with Bluetooth streaming or from a microSD card. These Bluetooth speakers are portable, waterproof and can handle many of the bumps or scrapes that you throw at them. This makes them perfect for any camping, festival or outdoor trips you may take this summer. Just answer this simple question for a chance to win one of these Bluetooth speakers.

What is the latest Android release called?

A. Lollipop
B. Bubblegum
C. Candyfloss

Email your entry, name and address (one only) to:
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Sweating the small stuff: 1. The promoter of this competition is Clark White Publishing Ltd. 2. The competition is open to all UK residents aged 18 years or over, excluding employees of What Mobile, all participating companies, its agents or families and any company associated with this competition. 3. By entering, all entrants will be deemed to have accepted these rules. 4. All entry instructions form a part of the terms and conditions. 5. Closing date: 5 May 2015. 6. Only one entry per email/IP address will be accepted. 7. The correct winning entry will be selected randomly by the administrator of the What Mobile Facebook page. The winner, who must be a UK resident, will be sent a Karbonn A19. 8. No cash alternative or other device will be offered. 9. No correspondence will be entered into except that the name of the winner will be available upon written request.

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Microsoft Lumia 640

The Lumia 640 continues Microsoft's assault on the budget end of the market, offering mid-range features and attractive styling in a competitively priced package.

Low end Windows Phones are the life raft that keeps Microsoft's mobile operating system afloat and without them, the OS would sink beneath a sea of Android market dominance. Products such as the Lumia 520, still the biggest selling Windows Phone today, continue to be responsible for a large majority of sales. These are quality devices that offer bang-for-buck and in some cases excel against competing Google devices on features and price.

Not less than a couple of years ago, the Lumia 6 series was the bottom end of the spectrum. It was the cheapest phone of the range, had great features for the price and unsurprisingly sold very well. Fast forward to today and we now have two other product lines that sit below the 6 series; namely the 5 and 4 series. This means that any new Lumia carrying the 6 badge is no longer relegated to the lower leagues and needs to be designed accordingly.

Enter the Lumia 640, a mid-range smartphone that still manages to maintain its bargain roots. Debuting in four colour variants: black, white, cyan and orange, for roughly £120, it offers superb value for money with a truly generous array of specs. On first glance, the phone continues the familiar Lumia styling with its polycarbonate rear shell and cornering Gorilla Glass 3 surface. Once again, a dedicated camera shutter button is absent, as we've come to expect from Lumia phones in the 6 series and below. The case can be removed, revealing a generous 2500mAh battery that should last a reasonable amount of time.

CLEARBLACK

Moving onto the display, you get a 5" 720P LCD panel that supports ClearBlack, all of which is usually reserved for higher priced devices. The rear camera is an 8 megapixel shooter that records 1080P 30FPS video and Microsoft's Lumia camera application comes as standard, giving you access to all sorts of manual features such as ISO, shutter speed and exposure compensation. The phone also features a 1 megapixel front-facing camera capable of taking 720P video, which is a welcome edition considering the Lumia 630/635 didn't feature a front camera at all (or even a proximity sensor for that matter).

Internal specs again seem quite generous considering the price bracket, with a quad core Snapdragon 400 CPU clocked at 1.2GHZ and an Adreno 305 GPU. The 400 CPU is getting a bit old now having been released roughly 18 months ago in late 2013, but it still ranks as a good all-round entry/lower mid-level CPU. Microsoft has also thrown in 1GB RAM, which will ensure it retains full performance compatibility when Windows 10 mobile eventually roles out later this year.

With so many budget phones getting churned out of Microsoft at the moment, it's difficult to know which one to go for. If you're willing to go just over £100, the Lumia 640 really does offer unbeatable value for money. It will be available in single or dual sim versions and should be released by the time you pick up this magazine.

Gorilla Glass 3 surface

Generous 2500mAh battery

Microsoft Lumia

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Festival favourites

With summer on its way, thousands of us will flock to Glastonbury, Leeds and Reading or other music festivals. Unfortunately smartphones aren't the most reliable devices in this situation, with batteries that don't even last a day let alone an entire weekend. This is troublesome; especially if you need to find the stage your favourite band is on or call your friends to locate them.

Music festivals aren't exactly the friendliest of places for expensive smartphones either. Not only do you have to keep your phone safe from downpours or mud, but there's a chance a stray cup of beer could come hurtling towards you and spill all over it.

Using the right accessories can help you avoid these hazards. Whether you want to give your phone battery some extra juice or keep it away from the elements, take a look at *What Mobile's* list of essential festival accessories.

01 / JCB Outdoor Bluetooth Speaker

£60

A lightweight speaker that delivers fantastic sound wherever you are on the festival campsite. It can play tunes via Bluetooth connectivity or microSD card, so there are no wires to fiddle around with here. A rubber shell will protect it from potential bumps, whilst a waterproof feature means you needn't panic about any festival downpours.

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02 / Olixar enCharge Power Bank

£40

Modern smartphone batteries don't usually last longer than a day, which can be a nightmare at music festivals. The enCharge Power Bank helps solve this common problem. It can charge up to two devices at once without the need to plug it into a mains socket. It even comes with a bright torch to help you find your way through the campsite at night.

03 / Olixar Selfie Smart Pole

£25

If there's a large group of you, getting everyone in a selfie can be a difficult task. The Olixar Selfie Smart Pole makes getting photos of you and your friends much easier. Just connect your phone to the Pole and pair them up via Bluetooth. Extend the pole and press a button to take the perfect selfie. It's that simple.

04 / Libratone Zipp

£300

If you're an audiophile and really want the best quality tunes when chilling at the campsite, you'll want the Libratone Zipp. FullRoom technology means you will get the same sound quality as everyone else no matter where you're positioned. It also lasts up to an impressive eight hours on a single charge.

05 / ReTrak Retractable Headphone Splitter Premier

£13

No matter how neatly you stick cables in your bag, they always seem to come out in a tangled mess. The Retractable Headphone Splitter eliminates this problem because the wires can be retracted into a sturdy shell when not in use. This means you and a pal can both plug in headphones and listen to music from the same device without having to faff around with tangles.

06 / ReTrak Retractable Headphones

£8

These retractable headphones follow the same premise as the retractable auxiliary cables. Bass sounds are pretty solid and, as they're in-ear headphones, they'll help drown out any nearby loud noises if you want peace and quiet at the campsite.

07 / ReTrak Power Bank and Car Charger

£30

Those lucky enough to be near their car at a music festival will want to look at this practical car charger. Not only can you charge your smart device from your car's cigarette lighter, but it also stores power so you can use it on the go. The retractable cable means you can store it anywhere tangle-free.

08 / Goodordering Pannier Backpack

£60

The Goodordering Pannier Backpack provides a stylish way of transporting all your gadgets to and from the festival campsite. There's plenty of storage, with specific pockets for your tablet. It's a very high-quality compact bag and its boxy design will ensure everything inside remains neat and tidy.

09 / Overboard Waterproof case

£18

Mud, rain or beer; these are some dangers that can take you by surprise when taking a photo of your favourite band. They can also do some serious harm to your camera phone. The OverBoard Waterproof Camera Case ensures none of these dangers come into contact with your phone when you're taking a photograph.

10 / Overboard Gadget Cases

£19

Festivals can be dangerous places for your smartphone or tablet. Even if they're not exposed to the elements, there's a chance a stray cup of beer will spill all over it. The OverBoard Gadget Case completely covers your device and ensures no liquid ever harms it. A transparent design enables full use of your device without ever having to remove the case, whilst a hand loop provides easy grip.

11 / ArmourDillo Samsung Galaxy S6 Protective Case

£13

The Samsung S6 is an expensive device, so it makes good sense to keep it protected at a festival. This case comes with a rubber back that, not only provides extra protection against bumps, but also offers extra grip so the phone doesn't slip out of your hand. Plus there's a stand at the back for when you want to watch a video hands-free.

10

09

11

WHAT MOBILE REVIEWS

The LG G4 features a top notch camera, high-spec performance and a leather design but can it compete with Apple and Samsung? Meanwhile the Galaxy A7 wins on price but compromises on power and battery.

"LG has tweaked the software and hardware"

20/ **LG G4**

24/ **Microsoft Surface Pro 3**

28/ **Huawei Honour 6+**

30/ **Huawei Honour 4X**

32/ **Samsung Galaxy A7**

34/ **Vodafone Smart 4**

How we review

To show you where a device succeeds or fails, we grade each device in five key areas.

Performance
First we fully test the speed and power of each device.

Usability
Next we find out how well the device functions in daily use.

Design
Then we rate the style and quality of the overall design.

Features
What kind of unique features and add-ons does it have?

Final verdict
A rating out of five, balancing cost versus performance.

Editor's choice

Only the very best devices will win our What Mobile Editor's Choice award.

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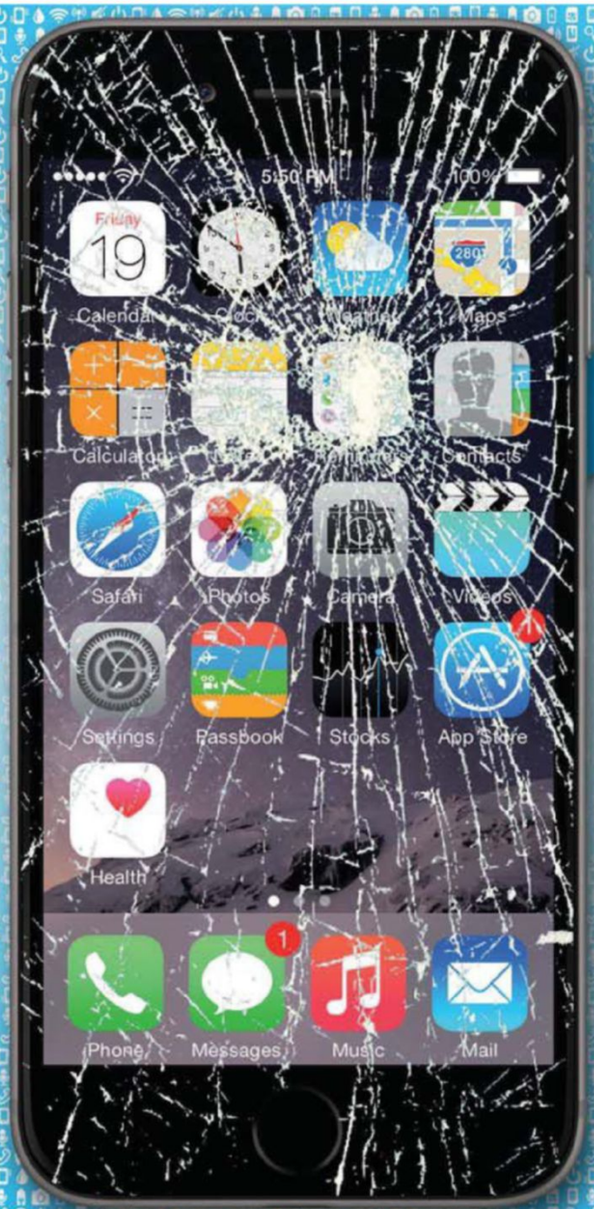

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LG G4

The 4th generation of LG's G series tries hard but still can't knock the Galaxy out of the sky

Price: £529.99 **Reviewer:** Alex Yau

SPEC SHEET

OS Android Lollipop 5.1
Processor Dual-core 1.8GHz quad-core
Screen 5.5-inches
Resolution 1,440 x 2,560-pixels
Memory 3 GB RAM
Storage 32 GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Rear camera 16MP
Front camera 8MP
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 148.9 x 76.1 x 9.8 mm
Weight 155g
Battery 3,000 mAh

AT A GLANCE

Speed	Camera	Battery
4/5	5/5	4/5

Say hello to the LG G4, LG's latest flagship device. Can a superb camera, high-spec performance and distinctive leather design help it compete against Apple and Samsung?

Since the G2's release, LG has become a major rival for Apple and Samsung when producing high-end smartphones. Last year's G3 was the pinnacle for the Korean manufacturer and it showed that it could produce a smartphone that was just as good as anything Apple and Samsung offered.

That gives the LG G4, the brand's latest flagship, a gargantuan task to face. Not only does it have tough competition from the iPhone 6 and Samsung Galaxy S6, it also has to top the excellent G3.

The G4's front looks similar to its predecessor at first glance. Looks can be deceiving, however, and the G4 is anything but a copycat phone. LG has tweaked the software and hardware, whilst a leather-back gives the phone its own distinct look. Will all this be enough to help LG escape the shadows of Apple and Samsung?

DESIGN

The LG G4 will really turn heads with its leather back. Available in tan, black, burgundy, blue, grey and yellow; stitching run's down the back of the phone and that leather jacket makes it feel more luxurious.

Sure, we prefer the Samsung Galaxy S6 edge's curved design, but the leather-backed LG G4 does have one advantage over its main rival. Whenever we held the all-glass S6 edge in our hands, we were always slightly worried about it slipping from our hands and crashing to the ground. The extra grip provided by the G4's leather back meant we no such worries.

The G4 is also slightly curved at the front and LG has dubbed this design the 'Slim Arc.' It claims that this design offers "20 per cent better durability in face-down drops" and that it "gives the smartphone a more comfortable and secure feel in the hand."

You can also buy the LG G4 with a ceramic back, but we'd recommend sticking with the leather models if you can afford to splash out an extra £100. The non-leather phones feel especially cheap and easy to scratch, which is worrying as the ceramic devices start from £500.

There are three buttons sitting below the 16MP camera on the back. We couldn't get used to this placement and it felt awkward everytime we had to stretch our fingers to lock the phone, adjust the volume or screengrab. The G4's phablet-sized dimensions can make it especially difficult for anyone with small hands to reach the buttons.

Full leather jacket – an added premium of £100

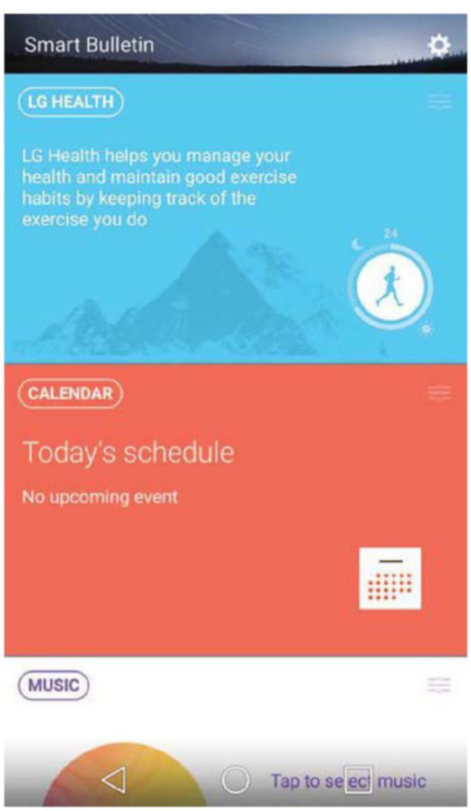
CAMERA

LG certainly hasn't held back with the G4's cameras. The 16MP rear camera boasts a superfast lens that takes in 80 per cent more light than the LG G3's already impressive camera. If a camera lens takes in more light, then there's a higher chance the photographs it snaps will appear brighter and have more emphasis placed on your chosen subject. It's also more likely that the photographs will become blur-free.

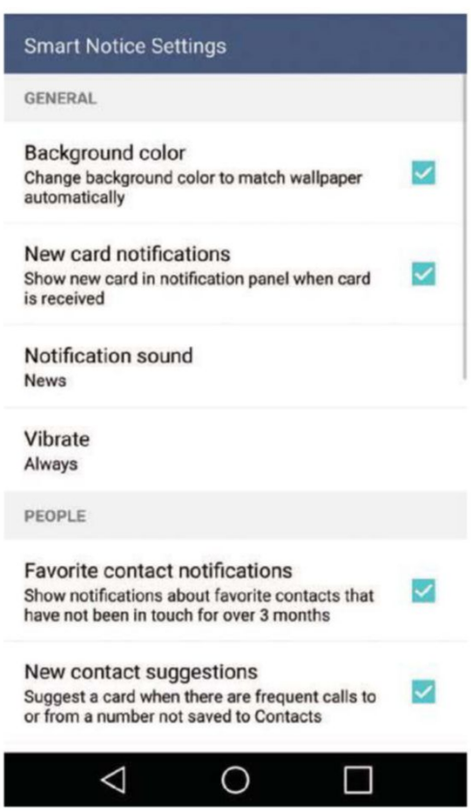
The LG G4 has another fancy trick where it fires off an infrared beam every time a picture is taken. This beam is reflected off your subject and back to a sensor on the phone, telling it how far away your subject is. All this helps the G4's camera do a better job of focusing and adjusting contrast.

A colour spectrum sensor has also been added, the first for any mobile phone. This sensor helps adjust your camera's flash so the colours in photographs resemble what you're seeing with your own eyes. All this is finished off with Optical Image Stabilisation, which reduces any blur that could potentially be caused by shaking hands.

Does all this fancy tech work? The LG G4 handled any condition we tested it in and it especially impressed us in bright environments. Colours of vibrant subjects stood out and it easily captured tiny details like strands of hair. Night shots were just as fantastic and the camera did an excellent job of balancing



LG Health app – track your daily tally of walking steps and runs



Android Lollipop – the G4 sports the latest Android OS with advanced notifications

light emitting from nearby light sources with darker objects.

If you really want to take advantage of the rear camera, you'll want to stick the phone into manual mode. This lets you adjust white balance, shutter speed, focus and many other features. Each photograph we snapped in manual mode looked marginally better than those taken in auto mode. The quality was almost on a par with the photographs taken by DSLR cameras, the standalone cameras many professional photographers use.

Dedicated photographers will be glad to hear that photos can be saved in either JPEG or RAW formats. When images are captured in a JPEG format, the photograph is compressed and information is lost. When a photograph is compressed, the overall quality also drops. No information is compressed in RAW formats and the overall quality of RAW photographs is higher than those of JPEG photos.

> "Quickly open and close your hand in front of the camera and four selfies will be taken two seconds apart from each other"

Double tap the bottom button on the back and the LG G4's camera app starts up, even when the phone is locked. This is useful when you want to quickly take a photo without having to faff around with unlocking the phone and finding the camera app. It's a neat feature, but it is a little slow when starting up.

The front 8MP camera isn't as advanced as the 16MP rear camera, but it did a decent job of bringing out the details of our ugly mugs in selfies. Gesture control is a useful feature when taking selfies. Quickly open and close your hand in front of the camera and four selfies will be taken two seconds apart from each other. You just have to pick your favourite. Then there's beauty mode, which helps smooth out any wrinkles or blemishes from your face.

SCREEN

The LG G4's screen boasts a massive 5.5-inch screen. The quad-HD screen has a resolution of 2,560 x 1,440 pixels, which makes all videos, images and text look vibrant and sharp. This is partly due to the IPS LCD screen. In simple terms, this technology ensures that all the colours on screen appear more vibrant and saturated.

The overall result is a screen that isn't as good

LG G4: manual dexterity

The LG G4's manual mode setting can be pretty intimidating for the average camera user. We've translated some of its main features into a language you can easily understand.

SHUTTER SPEED

Shutter speed controls how long your smartphone's camera stays open for when taking a photo. The longer the shutter stays open, the more light it's exposed to. A fast shutter speed is perfect for fast action shots. For example, if you use a fast shutter speed whilst snapping a quick moving car, the car will appear perfectly still with no blur in the photograph. Set a slow shutter speed and a motion blur effect travelling in the direction of the moving object will be added.

WHITE BALANCE

When you take a photograph, you may sometimes notice that objects appear more orange or blue than they are in real life. That's because different light sources can alter the colour of objects seen by a camera lens. White balance helps counter this by adjusting the colours of objects in photographs so they closely resemble what we see with the naked eye. For example, a tungsten white balance setting adjusts the colours of objects in an indoor setting to closely match what you're seeing with your eyes.

MANUAL FOCUS

Manual focus helps you adjust your camera's focus on a subject of your choosing. Want to focus on a piece of fruit? Simply find your subject and adjust the manual focus until that fruit is the clearest object on screen.

AUTO MODE

This mode automatically adjusts your camera's white balance, focus and flash settings for the best shot it thinks it can take. This is perfect if you want to quickly get a snap without having to faff around with too many settings.

DUAL SHOT

Takes two photos at once using both the front and rear cameras.

Full auto – letting the camera set the scene

Full manual – choosing white balance, shutter speed, and focus

Green party – the camera has selected the pitch for exposure leaving the sky over exposed

as the Samsung Galaxy S6's, but one that's nonetheless one of the best on the market.

If you're worried about dropping the phone and smashing the screen, the Gorilla Glass 3 screen should stop that happening to some extent. Gorilla Glass 3 is special glass that's been tested and punished to withstand drops from certain heights. It's worth noting that Gorilla Glass 3 isn't the most recent and advanced Gorilla Glass screen on the market. That title goes to Gorilla Glass 4, which the Samsung Galaxy S6 uses. We didn't test the G4 out in a drop test, but it does feel quite tough and sturdy.

PERFORMANCE

A Snapdragon 808 processor is fitted beneath the LG G4's shell. This means that the LG G4 isn't the most powerful phone on the market, as the Samsung Galaxy S6 and HTC One M9 both respectively use the more advanced Exynos 7420 and Snapdragon 810 processors. Processor-heavy games don't run as smoothly on the G4 as they do on its rivals, but we experienced no problem with overheating. Games like Hearthstone and Real Racing 3 also ran without any hiccups. We did have problems using Bluetooth, Spotify and RunKeeper together, however, as RunKeeper either crashed or took a long time to boot up.

A bonus the LG G4 has over its rivals is that you can actually expand the internal 32GB memory to 128GB via an external microSD card. This means you needn't fork out more cash for pricier models if you want bigger storage.

SOFTWARE

The G4 runs on the latest version of Android 5.1 and it comes with LG's new UX 4.0 user interface. This is very tidy and easy to navigate, but some might not like how colourful and overly-vibrant it looks. The good news is that you download different wallpapers and themes to personalise the device into something that suits your own tastes.

Head left from the main screen and you get LG's Health app, calendar, music and various guides. There's an option to arrange what information you want displayed here or you can get rid of this information entirely if it gets in your way.

LG's Knock Code pattern can also be used as an alternative and very secure way of unlocking your device. Simply tap a chosen pattern on the screen to unlock your phone.

Smart Settings is also very useful. You can use it to automatically set your phone on loud, vibrate or silent, and switch on WiFi or Bluetooth depending on location. You can also set it to automatically activate apps like Spotify whenever you connect the G4 to headphones or an external speaker.

The organised amongst you will also want to take a deeper look into the Calendar's Event Pocket feature. This useful tool allows you to create new events by dragging images, text, memos, tasks, locations and even Facebook information into the planner. Nearby events will also be suggested and added to your calendar. Quick Memo+ is also useful. This feature allows you to save web content for later and it even strips away any annoying adverts that featured alongside the content.

BATTERY

Battery life is on a par with most other smartphones on the market. On more intensive days with regular WhatsApp, RunKeeper, Spotify and CityMapper usage, we had to reach for the charger within 10 hours of use. Battery Saver mode really helped in these instances. Whenever the G4's battery drops to 15 per cent and below, battery saving mode kicks in and disables certain features to keep your phone going. Then there's Smart Power saving, which tells you which apps are being particularly strenuous on battery life and gives you the option to shut them down.

An advantage the phone has over its rivals is its removable battery. This allows you to carry a spare battery and get more life out of the phone, but it will also help with the device's life span. Phone battery quality normally drops after 12 months. This can lead to shortened battery life, which can be annoying on phones like the iPhone where you can't replace the battery. The G4 avoids this common problem with its removable battery that can easily be replaced.

VERDICT

The leather case covering certainly helps the LG G4 stand out against expensive rivals. The G4 camera is one of the best we've tested and offers something for everyone from the selfie lover to the more advanced photographer. It doesn't have the strongest processor and with an average battery and awkward button placement, it doesn't really challenge as an iPhone and Galaxy smasher.

+ Impressive camera
+ Unique leather design
+ Removable battery and external storage

− Average battery life
− Doesn't have the most powerful CPU
− Awkward button placement

OVERALL ★★★½☆

PERFORMANCE	USABILITY
★★★★☆	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	**FEATURES**
★★★☆☆	★★★★☆

Microsoft Surface 3

The Surface 3 is an attempt to turn the Surface Pro line-up into a more manageable device

Price: £419 **Reviewer:** Philip Brown

SPEC SHEET

OS Windows 8.1
Processor Quad-core 1.6GHz Intel Atom x7-Z8700
Screen 10.8 inches
Resolution 1920x1080 pixels
Memory 2GB/4GB RAM
Storage 64/128GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Rear camera 8MP
Front camera 3.5MP
Connectivity Wi-Fi
Dimensions 267 x 187 x 8.7mm
Weight 622g
Battery 10 hour

AT A GLANCE

Speed	Camera	Battery
4/5	3/5	4/5

While Microsoft has struggled to make itself relevant in the smartphone space, even after buying up Nokia's hardware division, the software giant has made impressive in-roads into the tablet market with its Surface line up of slate computers. They may not sell like iPads, but its Surface Pro line-up has carved out a niche of its own for Windows users who want the best of both worlds: the power of Windows and a full QWERTY keyboard with the portability of a tablet.

"Starting at just £419 for the 64GB WiFi model the Surface 3 is closer to a Chromebook in price than a MacBook or gaming rig"

Its brand new Surface 3 is an attempt to package that formula up into something a bit more manageable – not to mention cheaper. Starting at just £419 for the 64GB WiFi model, the Surface 3 is closer to a Chromebook in price than a MacBook or a high end gaming rig, but it can run just the same apps thanks to full Windows 8.1 onboard. It's an experience marred only by the compromises we've come to expect to keep the price down.

The Surface 3 looks just like a shrunken Surface Pro 3, and that's no bad thing. While its striking, recessed edges give it a sense of thickness throughout, it's only 8.7mm deep, and feels solidly made. It's brittle with a premium finish, so unlike some cheapo Android tablets, you do not want to drop it to see what happens, but hey, that's what you expect from expensive technology.

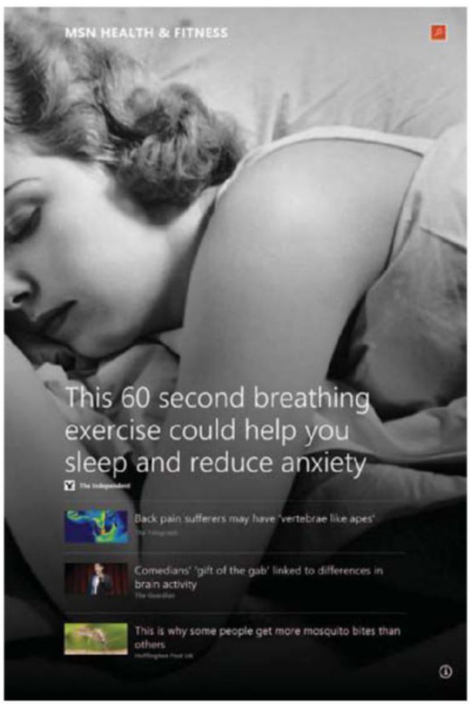
Save for the Window button, there are no interruptions on the front face, just that screen, with a few trimmings around the edges that are effectively invisible when confronted head on: USB and Micro USB ports, a micro SD card reader and a Mini DisplayPort for hooking up to a monitor.

KICKSTAND

Our only real niggle with the exterior in fact is the kickstand, which can only be positioned to a couple of angles, rather than as you please. It's got shallow and near-vertical covered for using on a desk, but the lack of any more options might annoy artists planning on using the Surface Pen to doodle away digitally.

This time round, the Surface 3 comes with a micro USB lead for charging, which is both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, it does

Desktop – Windows 8.1's desktop mode is more than a tad confusing on a tablet



Native apps – make full use of Windows 8.1's more modern UI, and are all the better for it

To RT or not RT

As the first mainline Surface tablet to run full fat Windows, the Surface 3 marks an ignominious end to Microsoft's attempt at a 'lite' operating system, Windows RT. Pitched as a Windows experience on tablets, it was a hideous hybrid of Windows 8 and Windows Phone that offered exactly nothing beyond being able to run on quiet, fanless mobile processors.

To make matters worse, though it could not run full Windows desktop apps like a Surface Pro slate, it still had a desktop mode which would only appear whenever you opened Microsoft Office apps, which had not been modified to work properly in RT. In other words, it was wholly confusing, and won't be missed, even if full Windows means the Surface 3 runs a little slower in some apps than it might have done with RT.

"The display is bright and crisp, with a full HD resolution that makes it usable in daylight if you fancy posing outside at a cafe"

mean you can use your phone's wall charger to juice it up too and saves the need for a proprietary cable and power brick; on the other it does mean you have to watch out what you plug it into. Many devices with USB inputs do not have a high enough power rating, and will flat out not charge the Surface 3, so watch out for that.

MANAGEABLE DISPLAY

By far and away the Surface 3's main selling point is its display. At 12-inches, the Surface Pro 3's touchscreen was just a little too big, at least for those used to iPads clocking in at under 10-inches. With a display measuring 10.8-inches diagonally, the Surface 3 feels much more manageable, closer to an iPad than the snapped off screen of a bulky 15-inch Acer laptop.

For power users who like to 'snap' apps side by side, this may be an inconvenience, but for more casual users it's a productivity boon as well as simply more portable. (It does have one trade-off however, which is that the optional Type Cover is now more cramped and difficult to type with, but it's not included by default, something we'll get to shortly).

That display is bright and crisp, with a full HD resolution that makes it more than usable in daylight if you fancy posing outside at a cafe this summer. The 3:2 aspect ratio of the Surface Pro 3 has also been carried over, which

Keyboard and pen

Want to turn your Surface 3 into a laptop? It's worth considering. While slightly cramped, the Type Cover works exactly as advertised, letting you tap away on a screen cover only a few millimeters thick. The Surface Pen works as it does on the Pro 3 here too, with the screen able to recognise 256 different levels of pressure, and fire up OneNote to scribble down your thoughts with a tap of a button at the top of the stylus.

As useful as both are however, they're wildly overpriced. The Surface 3 Type Cover alone will set you back an extra £110 – by comparison, a sexy Bluetooth Apple keyboard costs £45. Want the Surface Pen? That's another £40 on top. In practice, that puts the base 64GB Surface 3 on equal footing with the pricier iPads with the same amount of storage or more, and renders the Surface more of a tablet than a tablet-cum-laptop unless you're prepared to splash out.

A touch PC – just like a Windows PC but without a keyboard

Can you stand it? – kickstand only configured to a couple of angles

is a subtle blessing: we've always hated the widescreen 16:9 ratio of most Android tablets, which are so long they're effectively rendered unusable in portrait mode. The Surface 3 suffers no such problems and you can happily prop it up on your legs, rather than across them, to browse the web.

Though it lacks a fan so it's as quiet as a mouse – or a phone, at any rate – the Surface 3's internals are all Intel this time around, unlike the feeble mobile processors used by its predecessors.

JUST LIKE A PC

This is a PC, albeit without a keyboard. There's 2 or 4GB of RAM inside, as well as a quad-core processor (although the graphics are integrated, as you'd expect from a low power machine). As a result, it performs just as you'd expect.

You can do some mild Photoshopping, watch YouTube videos in full HD and browse the web without slowdown.

Want to play games though? They'll need to be yesteryear's, dialled down to low-res settings, or else less-taxing titles like Candy Crush.

That's more than enough for most users, who will never manage to slow this Surface down. However it is worth mentioning that under heavy load, with 10 or more pages in the browser open, it struggles more than a Chromebook, especially if you like to have two different browsers open at the same time.

That's to be expected from a more versatile and powerful operating system, but something to bear in mind if you're a bit of a tab hoarder.

This low power also has the added advantage of giving you a battery life almost comparable to Apple's top tablets and laptops.

We found the Surface 3 ran for seven hours on a charge while online, compared to an iPad's nine or ten, which is respectable when you consider that Intel processors are typically much more power hungry than their mobile counterparts.

The rear 8MP camera probably won't beat the one in your pocket on your smartphone (and if you try to by regularly pulling out a tablet to take photos, you deserve any insults that come your way).

But it's sharp enough in a pinch. The 3.5MP front-facer's great for selfies and video chats with far away friends on the sofa too, especially since Skype is supported by so many more devices than Apple's closed-off FaceTime.

WINDOWS PAIN

There's how it runs, though, and the software it runs. Honestly, Windows 8.1 has done little to address the issue of the Great Confuddling that Windows 8 wrought upon the world. ("There's no desktop, no wait here it is, hang on it's gone again, what does this Start button actually do?")

On tablet or PC it feels like two operating systems trying to get along in a tiny bedsit meant for one. The fact that the traditional desktop mode is effectively an app (that can also open apps) will blow technophobes' minds, and even if you can grasp this concept, it's quite tedious – iPads only have one launcher for a reason.

Windows 10 should alleviate some of these issues. If you can accept Windows 8.1's shortcomings, it's a very powerful OS, with lots of excellent software bundled in, including Office with a 365 one-year subscription, Skype, and the excellent OneNote and OneDrive. And unlike an iPad, there are no restrictions on the apps you can install, no walled garden you're forced to stay in. Want to get your games from Steam instead of the Microsoft Store? Go ahead. Just don't expect to be playing the latest shooter on this lesson in compromise.

VERDICT

You can do with it as you please, and everything, apart from the low-power processor, has been future proofed for the launch of Windows 10. Of course how many of those naysayers haven't already bought another tablet to surf on the sofa and stay in touch on holiday remains to be seen. If you're in that niche and are put off by the price of the Surface Pro 3 though, this is the slate for you.

+ Well priced as a Windows tablet
+ Excellent display
+ Windows 8.1 without the noisy fan

− Keyboard cover is not included
− Browsing not as fast as Chromebook
− Lacks the beautiful finish of an iPad

OVERALL ★★★★☆

PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆

USABILITY ★★★★☆

DESIGN ★★★★☆

FEATURES ★★★★☆

Huawei Honor 6+

The Honor 6+ packs a punch but it won't break the bank, so will it make Huawai popular in the West?

Price: £299.99 **Reviewer:** Alex Yau

The Samsung Galaxy S6 and iPhone 6 are impressive devices, but they're also expensive. Enter Huawei's Honor; a sub-brand of functional and feature-packed devices that won't put as much strain on your wallet.

The Honor 6+ is Huawei's latest flagship device under the Honor name and it's obviously taken some inspiration from Apple in terms of its design and name.

This isn't a cheap rip off, however.

The Honor 6+ has its own tricks to rival products from the most popular phone giants. You'll even be surprised by some its features, some of which are rare to find on a £300 smartphone.

Devices like the Honor 6+ have already made Huawei extremely popular in the East. Can it help Huawei achieve the same popularity in the West?

DESIGN

The main difference between the Honor 6 and Honor 6+ is the 5.5-inch full HD screen. This puts it on par with the LG G4, iPhone 6+ and OnePlus One for screen size.

The design obviously takes inspiration from the iPhone 6, whilst the metal frame is a nod to the iPhone 4. Available in black, white or gold; the Honor 6+ sports a fibreglass jacket that gives it a more upmarket feel.

Our main complaint with the design is that it very easily picks up fingerprint marks and scratches.

The volume and side buttons have been placed on the phone's right hand side. Placement of these buttons could be improved as we sometimes accidentally locked the phone when we merely wanted to adjust the volume and vice versa.

5.5 inch display

Volume buttons on the right side. Would have been better on the left

Fibreglass case for a premium feel

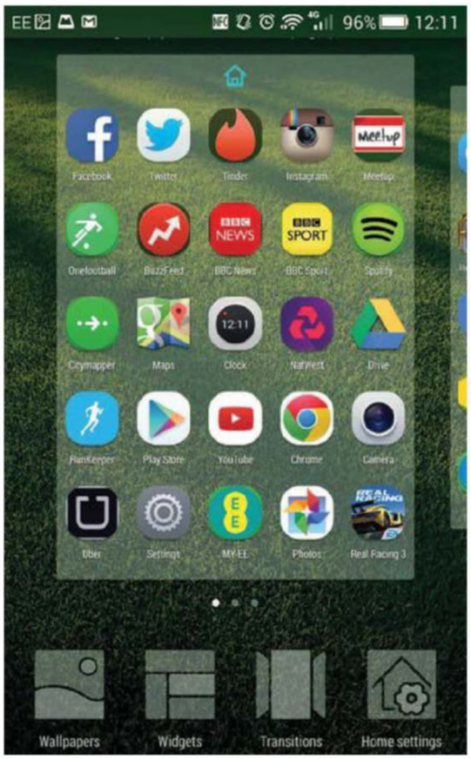
SPEC SHEET

OS Android
Processor Kirin octo-core 925
Screen 5.5-inches
Resolution 1080p
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Rear camera Dual 8MP
Front camera 8MP
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 150.5 x 75.7 x 7.5mm
Weight 165g
Battery 3,600 mAh

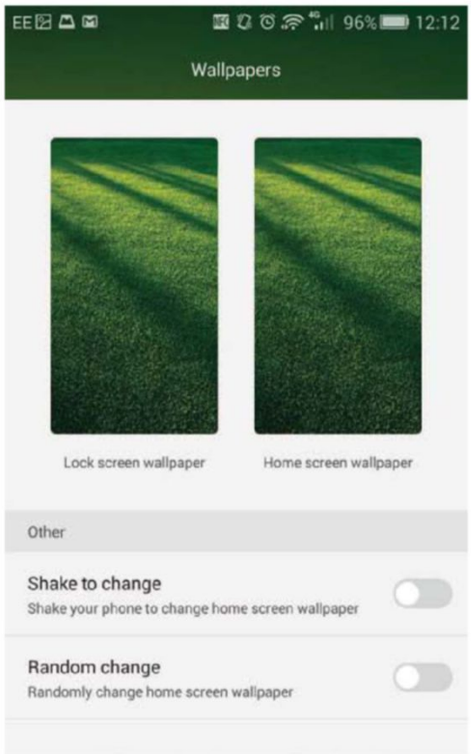
AT A GLANCE

Speed	Camera	Battery
3/5	4/5	3/5

Spot on – focus is adjusted after pic is taken



Full power – apps and games are responsive



Off the wall – Wallpaper selection screen

CAMERA

The Honor 6+ packs a dual-8MP rear camera, which Huawei claims is the first for any smartphone. What use is this? Both cameras use different focus settings when taking pictures and this allows you to adjust a photograph's focus after you've taken it. This can only be done in wide aperture mode, but it works incredibly well.

Stick the camera in the regular photo mode and it does a decent job of taking bright and vibrant pictures. It is a bit sluggish, however, so you'll have to be a little patient with it. Combine all of this with an excellent 8MP front-facing camera and the Honor 6+ gets high marks in the photography department.

SCREEN

That massive 5.5-inch full-HD screen makes videos, texts and images pop out with plenty of colour and vibrancy. Even on a very bright day, we had no trouble with glare. Tilt the phone at various angles and you can still see everything on the screen clearly.

The screen is made by JDI – a venture between Sony, Toshiba and Hitachi – so the screen is very high quality indeed. It's also made of Corning Gorilla Glass 3, so it should do a decent job of withstanding any bumps or drops.

PERFORMANCE

Beneath the Honor 6+'s fibreglass shell is a Kirin octo-core 925 processor. This ensures apps and games are responsive and run smoothly for the most part. The only app that crashed regularly on us was the hit-date site Tinder and we could only open the app on the second attempt. Perhaps someone is trying to tell us something. There was no problem with overheating.

A microSD slot expands the internal 32GB memory up to 128GB with the appropriate card.

SOFTWARE

The Honor 6+ runs Android 4.4 KitKat with Huawei's own style of user interface. It's slick and very easy to use. If you dislike the stock theme that comes straight out of the box, there are plenty of custom themes on offer.

There's no app drawer, which is a shame. The app drawer is where you store any apps you don't want clogging up your homescreen. Without this, the homescreen was cluttered up with folders or unwanted apps.

BATTERY

The Honor 6+'s 3,600mAh battery is 600mAh bigger than the iPhone 6+'s. A day of intensive use with satellite navigation, Bluetooth, RunKeeper and Spotify, only drained the battery by 30 per cent. We made the 6+ last all day without any problem, which can't be said about other top-of-the-range smartphones.

VERDICT

If you're after an affordable device that packs plenty of top-notch features, you can't really go wrong with the Huawei Honor 6+. The camera is unique, the performance is fantastic and the battery life beats those of more expensive phones. It loses points for its sluggish camera and inability to handle certain apps. Don't let that put you off. The Honor 6+ is well worth the money.

+ Great design
+ Decent battery life
+ Brilliant camera

− No app drawer
− Sluggish camera
− Is prone to the odd crash

OVERALL ★★★★☆

PERFORMANCE	USABILITY
★★★★☆	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	**FEATURES**
★★★★☆	★★★★☆

Huawei Honor 4X

A quality smartphone for a third of the usual price – great, as long as you're not a brand snob

Price: £149.99 **Reviewer:** Alex Yau

Honor is the sub-brand of Chinese phone and infrastructure manufacturing giant Huawei, which most people here have never heard of either. The 'Honor' range was launched in late 2014 and aims to provide user-friendly and affordable devices to a young audience.

So if you're after a premium-looking smartphone for a third of the iPhone 6 and Samsung Galaxy S6's price, then the Honor 4X is a decent shout.

You get a pretty large device with a 5.5-inch screen, 720p resolution and decent performance. It feels more well-built than its £149.99 price tag would otherwise suggest. In fact, we think the 4X is more well-built than the non-leather LG G4.

PERFORMANCE

The Honor 4X comes equipped with a Kirin 620 processor. It's not the most advanced processor on the market, but it did a decent job of running games like Hearthstone, Do Not Commute and Crossy Road with no noticeable struggle. However, we did notice some hiccups with more processor intense games like Real Racing 3, however.

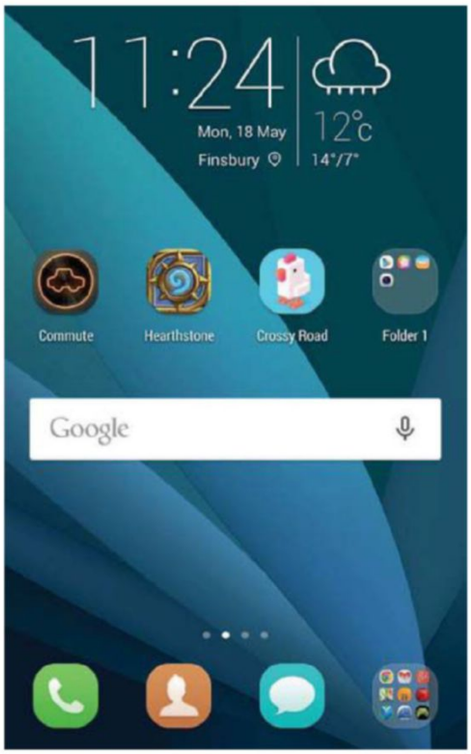
That cheap headline price tag gets you a feature that neither the super expensive Samsung Galaxy S6 or iPhone 6 have – a microSD slot, which can expand the Honor 4X's 8GB internal storage capacity to a maximum of 32GB with a microSD card that costs a few quid.

SPEC SHEET

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor HiSilicon Kirin 620
Screen 5.5-inch
Resolution 720p
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 32GB
Rear camera 13MP
Front camera 5MP
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 152.9 x 77.2 x 8.7mm
Weight 165g
Battery 3,000 mAh

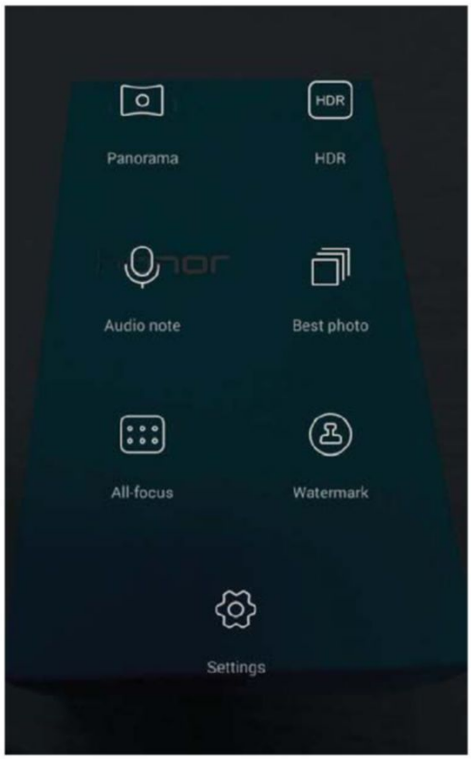
AT A GLANCE

Speed	Camera	Battery
3/5	4/5	3/5



Applying power – the processor didn't struggle

Snap shot – the phone has a 13MP camera



Sharp focus – the range of camera settings

DESIGN

The front of the phone sports a typical design familiar on many Android phones nowadays. It's all black with the speakers and camera on top. We'd recommend picking the version with a white plastic back. The contrast between black and white helps the phone stand out and it actually feels more well-built than the non-leather LG G4.

Volume and power buttons have been placed on the side. Those of you with small hands may find it difficult to reach these as the phone is quite chunky. And despite its huge size and 165g weight, the Honor 4X feels very lightweight.

CAMERA

A host of filters, manual settings and focus mode, which lets you set the focal point of a photo after it's been taken, can help you get some sharp and vibrant shots from the 13MP rear camera. The 8MP camera was also decent at taking selfies. Video is a different story, however, and the phone noticeably struggled to quickly adjust from light to dark settings in our tests.

SCREEN

Despite only having a 720p screen that isn't full-HD; images, text, photographs and videos popped out with plenty of colour and decent quality. At 5.5-inches, there's plenty of room for everything you want to view.

SOFTWARE

The Honor 4X uses Huawei's Emotion 3.0. Whilst the on-screen icons and colours were attractive, some might not like the childish skin given to some app icons. Thankfully you can choose from a selection of themes should you dislike the stock one.

We would have preferred an app draw that holds any unwanted apps. The absence of this means that you're either stuck with loads of folders or stray apps cluttering up your home screen.

Another welcome feature would have been haptic feedback. Haptic feedback provides a response, such as a vibration, every time you press a button. Without haptic feedback, we were sometimes left wondering a button had actually worked on the Honor 4X.

BATTERY

Battery life is decent through moderate usage and it lasted us the entire day before going dry. A very neat addition is the Ultra Battery Mode, which can be switched on when battery life is anywhere below 15 per cent. This feature helps prolong the Honor 4X's battery life by barring access to many apps and only allowing the use of important functions, including Dialler, Messaging and Contacts.

VERDICT

Here's an affordable phone that offers many features at a great price. The build quality even feels better than the LG G4 (P24 which costs double the price). Huawei isn't yet a big name over in the West, but phones like the 4X are helping it head in that direction.

+ Good design
+ Decent battery life
+ Affordable price

− Weak processor
− Average camera
− UI isn't the most attractive.

OVERALL ★★★☆☆

PERFORMANCE ★★★☆☆

USABILITY ★★★☆☆

DESIGN ★★★★☆

FEATURES ★★★☆☆

Samsung Galaxy A7

A Galaxy Note-esque phablet with a lower price but it compromises on power and battery

Price: £319 **Reviewer:** Philip Brown

Once upon a time, you used to be able to set your watch by smartphone releases. Apple would release a new iPhone in the autumn, while Samsung and HTC would follow up the next spring with their own competitors. And then sure enough, just a few weeks after that, both would follow up with 'Mini' versions of their new Galaxy S or One Android phones, which tended to cut costs by ripping out all the premiums, including their classier casings and materials.

Samsung is still doing that of course, but we're now seeing it take a bit more care with the mid-sized, mid-range sector than it once did. It's no longer enough just to blast the latest Galaxy S with a shrink-ray and call it a day, not when a phone as astounding as the Sony Xperia Z3 Compact remains on sale. The Samsung Galaxy A7 is the company's response, a generously sized smartphone that wants to compete with the iPhone for fancy feel in the hand, not the budget phones nestling below it on Pay As You Go. And by and large, it's a success. Looks aren't everything when it comes to the mobile in your pocket, but they certainly help.

DESIGN

Samsung's new Alpha sub-brand is all about sexy, and this is that alright. The A7 is the company's thinnest phone ever at just 6.3mm thin. It still resembles a Galaxy Note – a slimmed Jurassic World Chris Pratt to Park & Rec's tubby Andy Dwyer – but the metal frame gives it an elegant feel comparable to clutching an iPhone. It's that good (well, the white and blue versions. Gold is always tacky). It's tough to reach across with one hand and it lacks the stylus for the Galaxy Note for easier two handed use but it's solid, ergonomic and a pleasure to hold.

That doesn't come at a cost for ports, thankfully: the A7 still sports a micro SD slot so you can bump up the storage with some of your own quickly and easily, something many all-metal phones do not allow still (Apple, we're looking at you). It does have some durability trade-offs however: it goes without saying, but this phone is not as waterproof as a Sony, or as durable as one of Samsung's plastic phones.

The display holds up well though. It's only a 1080p resolution panel, rather than 2K, but it's still extremely sharp, and the AMOLED display gives you vivid colours including really deep blacks so it's just as easy on the eye when the screen is powered on. The 5.5-inch width puts this firmly in the giant phablet category of phones, which makes it great for watching videos on, not to mention playing games and reading comics.

SOFTWARE

The Galaxy A7 comes running 4.4.4 KitKat, not the latest version of Android (5.0 'Lollipop', which sports a much cleaner and simplified look).

Samsung being Samsung, the South Korean tech giant has tampered extensively with Google's open-source operating system, which has its pros and cons. At this point, we're just resigned to the fact that it's always going to

SPEC SHEET

OS Android 4.4.4 KitKat
Processor Quad-core 1.5GHz Cortex-A53
Screen 5.5-inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Rear camera 13MP
Front camera 5MP
Video 1080p at 30fps
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 151 x 76.2 x 6.3 mm
Weight 141g
Battery 2600 mAh

AT A GLANCE

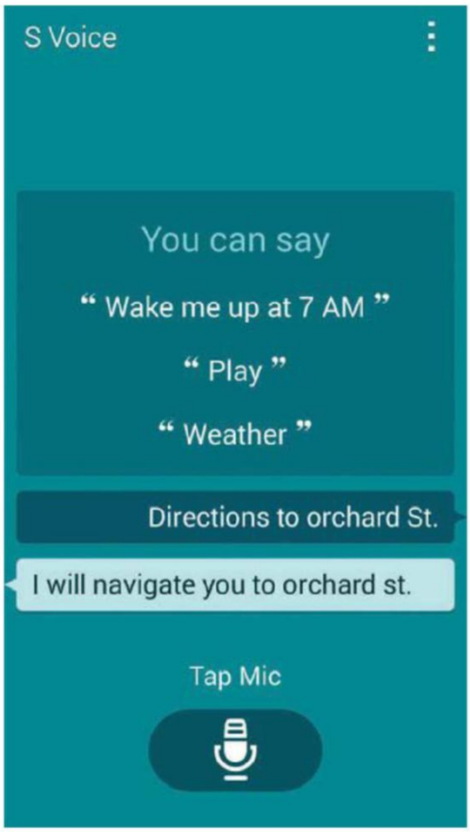
Speed	Camera	Battery
4/5	4/5	3/5

try this. On the one hand, some of Samsung's additions are legitimately useful – being able to open two apps on screen at once in Multi Window mode, for instance – but some are just inferior imitations of Google's own services. Do yourself a favour and avoid its S suite of services, especially the S Planner calendar. Gmail, Google Calendar and their siblings have rarely been improved on by developers in the Google Play store.

Samsung's UI is also just as unpleasant in 2015. TouchWiz still has that Fisher-Price vibe that the company's peddled since before the days of the smartphone, and you'll probably want to replace it sharpish with a launcher of your own.

That won't stop the more pressing problem though: that the A7 is not necessarily going to be a priority device for Samsung to update to the much slicker Android 5.0 Lollipop. If staying on the bleeding edge of Android is more of a concern to you, you're much better off going for the Google Nexus 6, or even the OnePlus One, which has just begun receiving 5.0 around the world.

Actually, what we missed the most on the A7 – due to its size – is the built in stylus software support of the Galaxy Note line. Sure, you can still buy a digital stylus and use it here, but you won't be treated to the instant shortcut menu that lets you quickly take notes or screenshots. It's one of the reasons Samsung's phablets are still the best, and missed here.



S suite – the phone has its own services

KitKat – A7 uses an older version of Android

PERFORMANCE

So far, so mostly good. Where's the catch? Unfortunately, exactly where you would think it is - in the phone's internals. To keep that beautiful expensive frame thin and the price tag just as lean, Samsung has resorted to older innards that just can't keep up with the rest of the company's top end phones.

For a start, the processor isn't up to speed with the Galaxy Note or the S6 – in fact it's closer in apparent day-to-day speed and benchmarks to the Samsung Galaxy Note 3, which came out in 2013. The 2GB of RAM is still plenty for multi-tasking but the phone is still trounced by the buttery smooth performance of the cheaper OnePlus One Android phone.

You're paying for a mid-range phone here cloaked in something much slicker, and you'll have to decide whether that's an acceptable compromise – this phone sadly isn't beauty and brains.

A thin chassis also means very little space for a battery. The 2,600mAh cell is quite a bit smaller than the 3,220mAh powering the Galaxy Note 4 – although since the phone is less power hungry, it only runs for slightly less. We managed to get through a day and almost to the following lunchtime in typical usage, making a few calls, browsing Reddit and watching some YouTube videos.

Unfortunately, it isn't removable, so you can't swap it out as you can on most older Samsung phones.

The camera too is a bit of a disappointment, compared to the stunner on board the similarly sized Galaxy Note 4, lacking as it does all the bells and whistles including optical image stabilisation. Its 13MP sensor performs well for the price range, but we've always felt that if you want a great camera you should buy one of last year's flagship phones at a reduced price instead. Video, too, is a tad disappointing.

The 1080p footage is sharp but not noteworthy, and you're not futureproofed with a 4K recording option as you are on other new smartphones including Samsung's.

VERDICT

The Samsung Galaxy A7 is an attractive proposition, But looks aren't everything. The cheaper £269 OnePlus One (reviewed last month) offers more power, a similar screen size and up-to-date software. And the £129 Vodafone Smart 4 Max with a bigger screen is less than half the price (see next page). If it's about power, not just looking powerful, perhaps look elsewhere.

+ Excellent screen
+ Premium S6-esque build
+ Super thin

− Not the latest version of Android
− Battery life could be better
− OnePlus One is cheaper

OVERALL ★★★★★

PERFORMANCE	USABILITY
★★★★☆	★★★☆
DESIGN	**FEATURES**
★★★★☆	★★★★☆

Vodafone Smart 4 Max

A six-inch 4G phablet for £129? No, we didn't believe it either at first

Price: £419 **Reviewer:** Philip Brown

Vast 6-inch display

Cheap SIM-free price of £129

1GB RAM of memory

SPEC SHEET

OS Andoid KitKat 4.4.4
Processor 1.2 Ghz Quad-Core, Qualcomm Snapdragon MSM8926
Screen 6"
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 32GB
Rear camera 13MP
Front camera 2MP
Video 720p
Connectivity GSM/EDGE/3G/4G wifi b/g/n NFC
Dimensions 164 x 83.4 x 7.9mm
Weight 170g
Battery 3,000 mAh

AT A GLANCE

Speed	Camera	Battery
3/5	3/5	4/5

It seems that not an issue of *What Mobile* goes by when we're not impressed by how the price of smartphone technology is dropping giving a bang for buck that would have been unthinkable a few years ago. Recently we've raved about the £269 OnePlus One and the £89 Motorola Moto G as examples of how cutting-edge smartphone technology is now available to everyone.

So let's welcome this month's contender for budget-buster of the year – the Vodafone Smart Max 4.

This ultra light phablet puts a phablet with a six-inch screen in your hand(s) for the stupidly cheap SIM-free price of £129. Yep. That's a phablet that's bigger than an iPhone 6 Plus for around a fifth of the price.

So what's the catch? Well, the main reason to be suspicious is because the Vodafone Smart Max 4 is locked to Vodafone and configured to only accept a Vodafone SIM card. Also, it is physically branded with the Vodafone logo, the box is covered in Vodafone branding and the Android software has been heavily customised by Vodafone to run various Vodafone messaging and browser apps that you can't delete. Vodafone can do this because Android allows networks and manufacturers to tweak the Android software for their own marketing puposes. Thus, on start-up the first thing you'll see is the Vodafone network logo. Launch the default browser and a Vodafone home page swings into view inviting you to go to places that suit Vodafone. Once the start-up sequence is compete you'll see a selection of Vodafone app icons (My Web, Discover, Message) which you can probably ignore as all the standard Google apps are present and correct.

> "The Vodafone Smart 4 Max will only connect to Vodafone and comes with network apps that you can't remove"

DESIGN

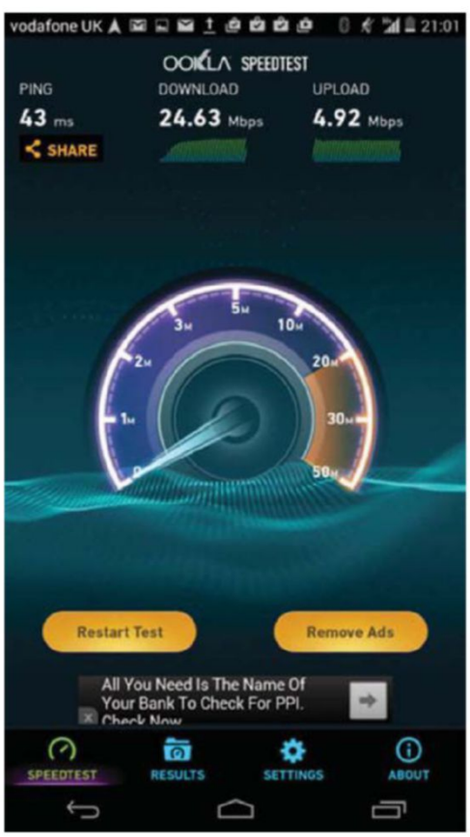
The first thing you'll notice is the huge size. The Smart 4 is not called "Max" for nothing.

With it's six-inch screen this is a giant smartphone. In fact it's best to forget that it is a phone and to regard it as a mini tablet which can make and receive phone calls. But despite the large screen real estate the Max 4 is remarkably thin and light. Some reviewers have complained that the Smart Max 4 is heavy and unwieldy. Either they must be puff balls or we don't know our own strength.

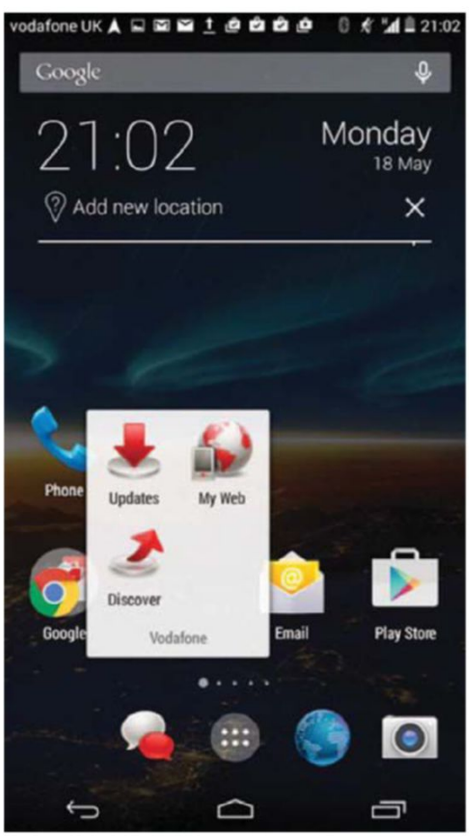
It's feather light. Slide it in a shirt pocket or front jeans pocket and you'll barely know it's there. In design terms the Smart Max 4 is not going to win any awards. But then, for the lunatic low price, it doesn't need to. It delivers straightforward form over function in a plain black slab devoid of gimmicks suc as wrap-around screens like the Samsung Galaxy S6 edge and the curious curves and bends of the LG Flex. The use of plastic throughout also keeps its weight to a minimum.

The back is also plastic but coated with a tough rubberised coating. The unit feels

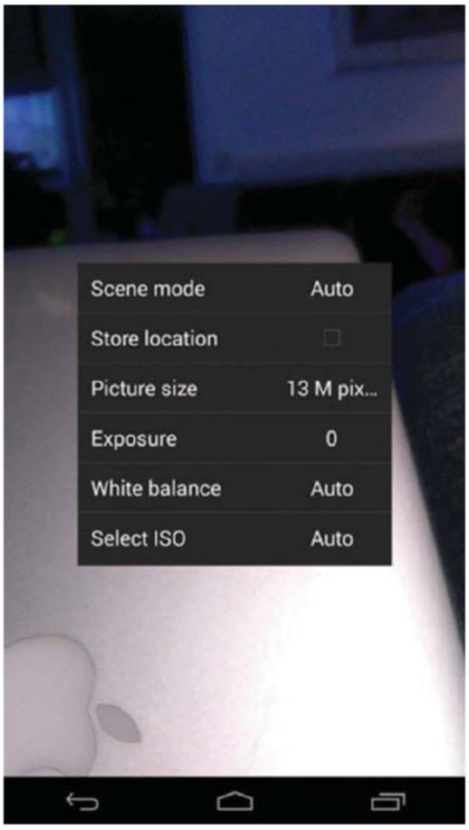
Display – display is low-res by current flagship standards but is perfectly legible



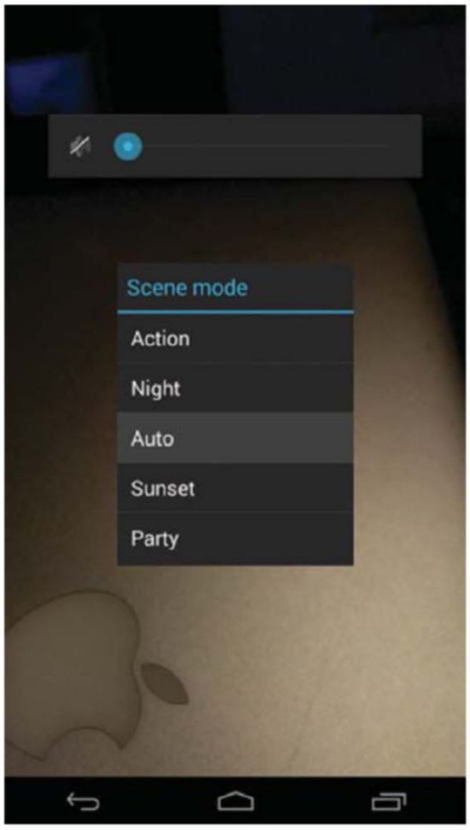
4G ready– Smart 4 Max can handle ultrafast 4G speed (subject to coverage)



Custom apps – Vodafone has configured the phone with its own apps



Camera control – despite its low price the Smart 4 Max has a range of camera controls



Scene shifter – the camera will set the best exposure and shutter speed for the situation

robust enough to use without a case, especially as the edges protrude slightly beyond the screen to give it some protection if it is ever dropped flat on its face.

The plastic power and volume buttons sit flush to the right hand-edge just below the flip-aside cover protecting the microSD card slot. The usual Android trio of 'Back', 'Home' and 'Shortcuts' are excluded from the case and appear as virtual buttons when the Home screen appears. So when the power is off, all you'll see is a plain black slab. The main downside are the flimsy plastic strips that cover the SIM and SD card slots. They are attached by a spider-web thin thread that is just waiting to be snapped off.

KITKAT

The Max 4 ships with Android 4.4.4 KitKat. This is a version below the latest 'Lollipop' version 5.0 that you'll find on the latest range of top-tier Android smartphones. The main difference is that Lollipop can support 64-bit chips and has more advanced notification features. Vodafone may get round to offering an update to Lollipop. But it's best to assume that you'll be using Android Kit Kat.

Own-label devices rarely offer updates to a new version of software. This is because the network

Manual exposure – touch control. The sky (left) has been manually selected compared with the Auto average setting (right)

Way to go – add a dash mount and it beomes an in-car sat nav

Big deal – iPhone 6 Plus (left) is dwarfed by the Smart 4 Max

will have spend considerable time and money configuring the phone to work with its own apps and modifications and won't want to threaten the tried and tested stability. It's a small sacrifice to make to get a smartphone of this specification and screen size for relative pocket money. With a price point of £129 it's obvious that some compromises had to be made, such as a two-year-old processor. And if we were picky we could point out that the Smart 4 Max's resolution of 720 x 1280 pixels is only half as good as the eye-popping 1440 x 2560 pixels of the new LG G4 (see review P22). But that would be to miss the point that you'd have to fork out another £350 or thereabouts for the G4.

In the cold light of day (pun definitely intended) the Smart 4 Max screen is just fine unless you are intent on expanding text and graphics to their maximum zoom level. Most users will find the clarity and colours are perfectly acceptable for routine tasks and web browsing.

PERFORMANCE

The Smart 4 Max comes with a Qualcomm Snapdragon 400 MSM8926 chip. This was launched two years ago as a top spec processor. But such is the speed of chip development that this 'Dragon' is now regarded as an average-performing entry-level processor. In real-world use this means that there is some noticeable latency when scrolling through graphics and images. For example, flicking through a Facebook news feed is a bit herky-jerky compared with say an iPhone 6 where a flick of your finger results in immediate and lag-free scrolling.

CAMERA

If you are relying on a camera phone for entering photo competitions and producing quality blown-up prints look away now, .

Making a smartphone with a pro-quality camera lens and sensor is not cheap. For £129 you're not going to get a camera that can match the 'real thing'. Nevertheless for social networking, Instagram, and Facebook the Smart 4 Max's 13MP back camera will do just fine.

The camera function packs a variety of aids to picture taking – choose Auto, Action, Night, Sunset, and Party and the software will choose the optimum exposure and shutter speed. The ability to select a resolution from 2MP, 3MP, 5MP, 8MP, and 13MP is useful. If you're sending a quick message pic keep the size low and dial up to 13MP for the big production photo. The camera will work out the average exposure across the image. You can over-ride this for priority exposure by touching the part of the image that you want correctly exposed.

Selfie freaks be warned. With just 2MP, the front camera is not going to cut the mustard. It's main use is to configure ad activate the Face Unlock feature (looking at the camera unlocks the phone).

MEMORY

The 8GB of internal storage will suffice for email, photo and file storage, however power users who want to store thousands of music tracks and videos will soon run out of space. Fortunately the Smart 4 Max has an SD card slot that can support micro SD cards to 32GB, something not available on the most expensive iPhone. Don't change the cards too often. The card slot is protected only by a thin cover attached by a delicate sliver of plastic. We can envisage this snapping off in short order if attacked by frenzied fat fingers.

VERDICT

If you crave a 6-inch 4G phablet for the equivalent of £2.50 a week over a year the Smart 4 Max is the only game in town. Purists will sneer at its elderly processor, low-res screen, and lack of "Lollipop". You'll be the one with around £400 more in your bank account. Just bear in mind it can only connect to Vodafone 4G network and you can't remove the Vodafone embedded software.

+ Huge six-inch screen
+ Astoundingly low price
+ Light-weight

− Locked to Vodafone
− Some screen latency
− Older version of Android

OVERALL ★★★☆☆

PERFORMANCE ★★★☆☆

USABILITY ★★★☆☆

DESIGN ★★☆☆☆

FEATURES ★★★★☆

HOW TO REMOVE BLOATWARE

A big problem with modern smartphones is the amount of bloatware installed on them. Bloatware is the term used to describe apps that are pre-installed on smartphones and ready to use out of the box. The trouble with bloatware is that, although they can be disabled and hidden, you can't delete them if you don't want them on your phone. This clogs up a phone's internal memory, which means you're not really getting the storage space manufacturers advertise.

But there is a way to unclog your phone of all this bloatware and free up its precious memory. Our guide breaks this process down into simple steps you can easily follow.

Removing bloatware on an iPhone is more difficult than on Android. Each stock app is tied heavily to iOS and deleting them creates the risk of bricking your iPhone. A bricked iPhone is a device that can't boot up properly. If you don't want to risk that happening, we recommend just shoving your unwanted iPhone apps in folders.

Before you can get rid of bloatware from your device, you'll have to root it first. Rooting a device will give you enhanced privileges and access to hidden settings.

ROOTING YOUR DEVICE CAN VOID ITS WARRANTY. DO SO AT YOUR OWN RISK.

1) Download any Android rooting software onto your computer. We used Kingo Root, but there are plenty of free alternatives knocking around the internet.

2) Launch the software once downloaded.

3) Enable your phone's USB debugging mode. To do this, go to 'Settings' > 'About phone' > tap 'Build number' several times to enable developer options

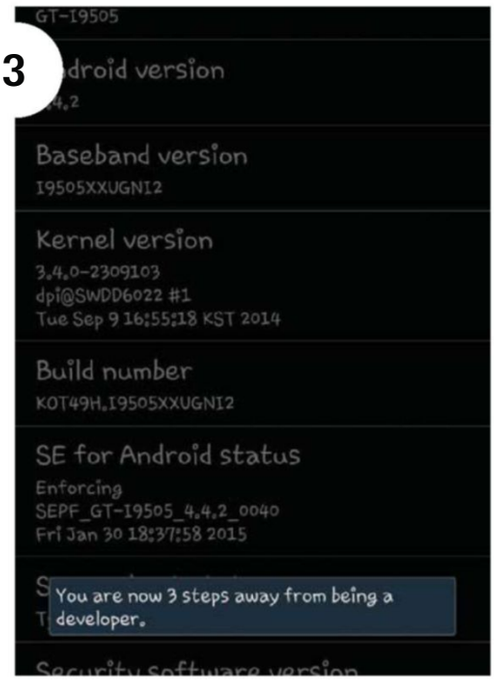
Go back to 'Settings.'

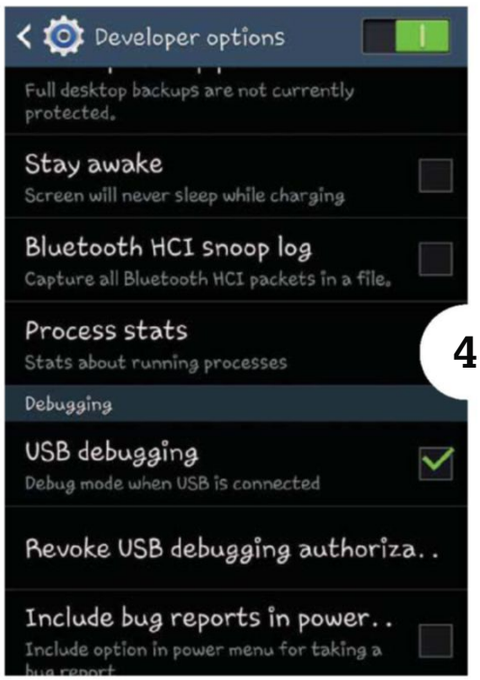
4) Head to 'Developer options' and make sure 'USB debugging' is checked.
Plug your device in. Make sure it is on and has at least 50 per cent battery.

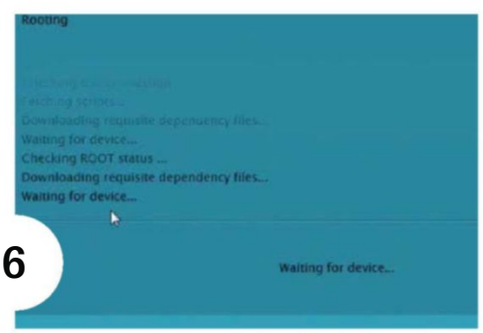
5) Wait for automatic driver installation. Click 'OK' when prompted.

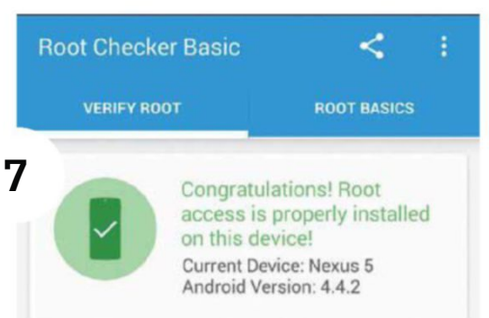
6) Wait for the software to do its magic and then click 'ROOT'. This takes several minutes and will restart your device several times.
Click 'Finish'.

7) Install Root Checker to see if your phone has been rooted.
Once rooted, its time to remove that bloatware.









NOW YOUR DEVICE IS ROOTED – HOW TO REMOVE BLOATWARE

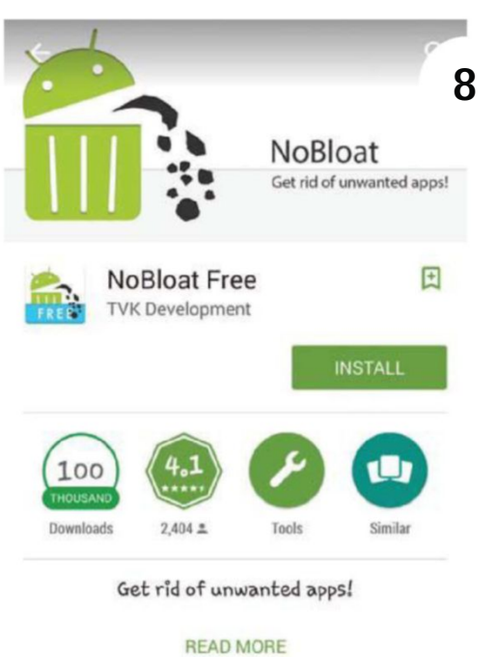
8) Head to the Google Play Store and downloaded any bloat software. We used No Bloat.
Open it up.
Click on 'System apps.'

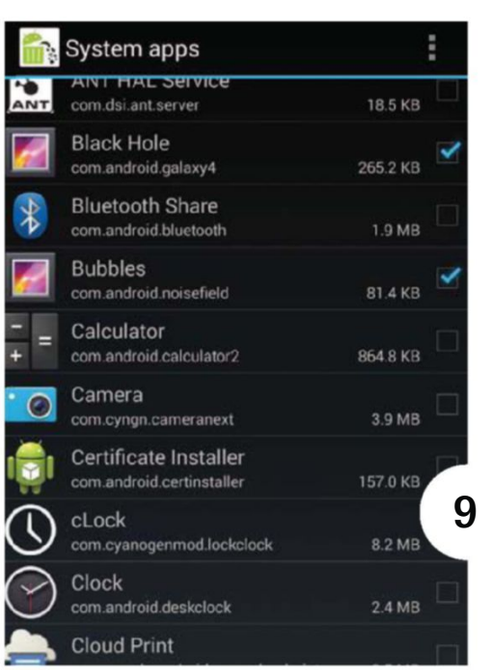
9) Go through the list and choose apps you want to delete.
Click 'delete'.

It can be very difficult to download any deleted app again, so make sure you 100 per cent don't want that app.

Repeat with any app you don't want.

Done. It's as easy as that.





Do I really need a DSLR?

Can phone cameras match a 'proper' DSLR? **Tom Wellburn** compares top-tier smartphones with a Nikon D3100

Smartphone cameras are big money these days and performance is taking centre stage as a hugely important feature. They are not yet up to the quality of your typical entry-level DSLR, however the gap is steadily closing and some phone manufacturers are getting incredibly close. Using innovative feats of engineering, brands such as Nokia, LG, Samsung and HTC have managed to work around the limitations of small, fixed mobile sensors to produce superior cameras capable of impressive results.

It's important to remember just how far smartphone camera technology has come in the past few years.

Expensive features such as Back Side Illumination (BSI) and dedicated imaging chips that were once only available on select devices are now commonplace, leading to great improvements throughout the various price-points.

SAMPLE EXAMPLE

Equally, things such as oversampling and image processing algorithms continue to improve thanks to more powerful chips. Microsoft's Lumia line shows a quality smartphone camera doesn't need to come at a price premium, as they demonstrated with the excellent Lumia 720.

The current big hitters are the Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge, LG G4, Apple iPhone 6 and HTC One M9. All represent the top-tier of smartphone camera technology, with some of the best sensors available. While there have been other smartphones in the past which made big efforts to prioritise camera technology, we'll be focusing on the newest, most current models for this comparison. They represent the fairest and best cross-section of premium devices that a lot of people still use daily.

GAME OF PHONES

How does this new crop of feature phones fare against each other and are they even slightly close to an SLR? To test them, we took four identical photographs with each device under the following conditions: Landscape, Low Light, Portrait and Macro. Extra functionalities such as HDR were always left to the auto setting for consistency across all devices and to test how interfering they were under normal conditions. If manual settings were available, they would be utilised to the best of the phones abilities. Otherwise, it would be up to the auto function to get the best picture it could. No third party camera applications were used, only those that came standard with the device.

BENCHMARK - NIKON D3100

To ensure an accurate benchmark of SLR quality but not too far beyond the capabilities of smartphone cameras, we picked an entry-level Nikon D3100 with a standard 18-55mm lens to take the relevant comparison photographs.

With its APS-C sensor and 14 megapixels of resolution, the Nikon D3100 represents a realistic, consumer-level benchmark.

Of course, having the added benefit of fully manual controls including one-touch white balance will make all the difference here.

How they stack up

LG G4

Megapixels: 16
Sensor Size: 1/2.6"
Aperture: f/1.8
Back Side Illuminated: No
Image Stabilisation: Yes (optical)
Manual mode: Yes

HTC One M9

Megapixels: 20
Sensor Size: 1/2.3"
Aperture: f/2.2
Back Side Illuminated: Yes
Image Stabilisation: No
Manual mode: Yes

iPhone 6

Megapixels: 8
Sensor Size: 1/3"
Aperture: f/2.2
Back Side Illuminated: Yes
Image Stabilisation: Yes (digital)
Manual mode: No

Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge

Megapixels: 16
Sensor Size: 1/2.6"
Aperture: f/1.9
Back Side Illuminated: Yes
Image Stabilisation: Yes (optical)
Manual mode: Yes

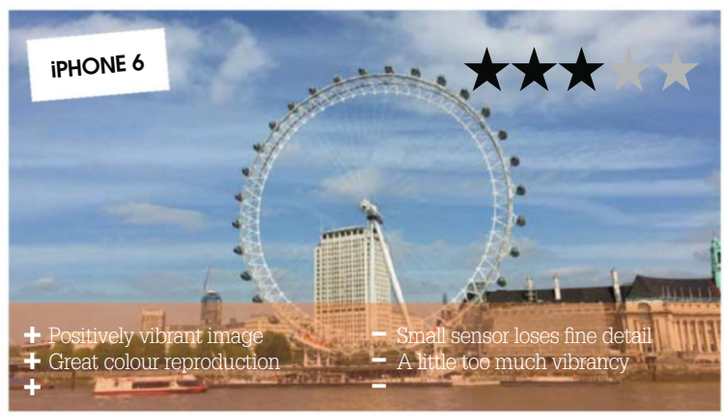
TEST #1

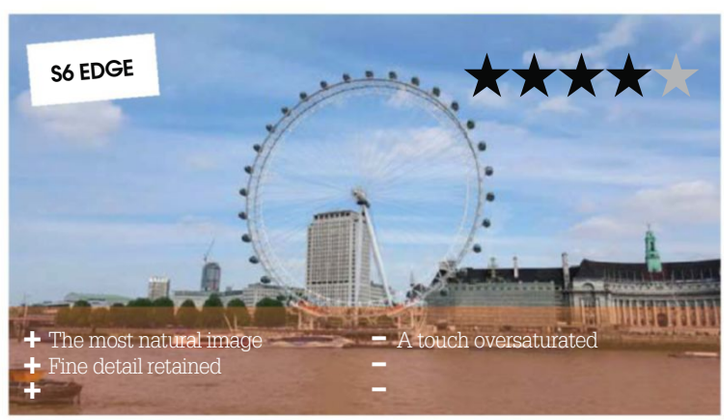
Landscape shot

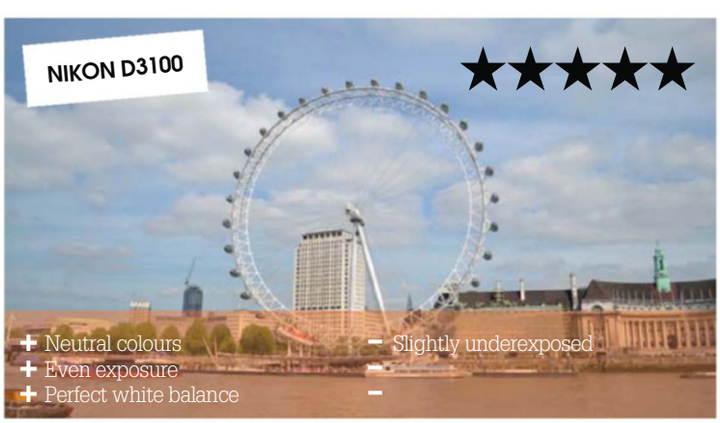
Landscape shots always provide a good all-round example of a camera's quality, as it's incredibly tricky to get a solid, even contrast exposure between architecture and sky. What better shot to test this out than the London Eye towering over Southbank on a summer's day?

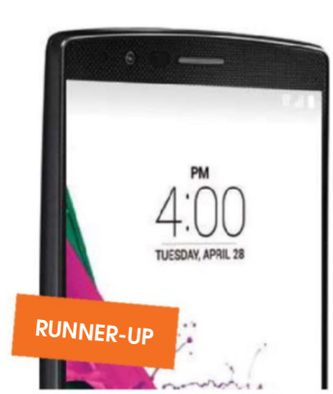
The Samsung Edge scores the first win of the test, offering up natural colour tones and a perfectly-exposed sky that balances well with the surrounding buildings. At first glance, it may seem that the LG G4 is the better picture but look closely at the wheel. In an effort to make the sky pop out of the picture, the LG G4 loses the subtle parts around the pods on the London Eye. Compare this with the Samsung Edge, which doesn't have the vibrancy of the G4 but presents a more even, rounded image. In post-edit it's always easier to pull details out of an image than it is to restore them, so this restrained approach is much preferred to overcompensating with vibrancy.

The iPhone followed close behind the front two, giving some excellent colour reproduction and an even contrast between the sky and buildings. However, it failed to catch the finer details due to its smaller sensor, which was evident when viewing the image up close on a high resolution panel. Still, for most people it should be more than acceptable. The HTC finished last in this test, having a really prominent yellow tone that was difficult to ignore.







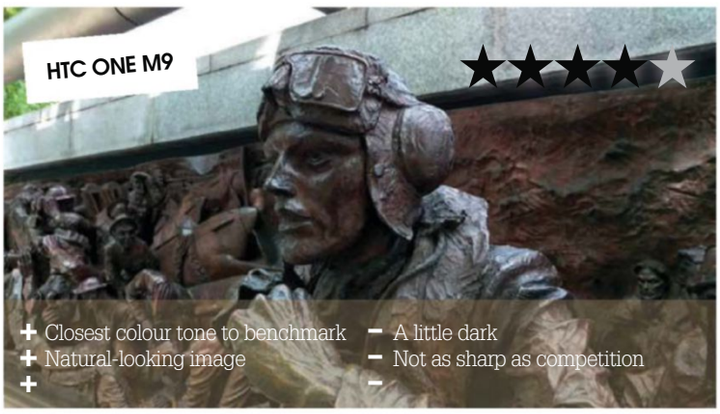


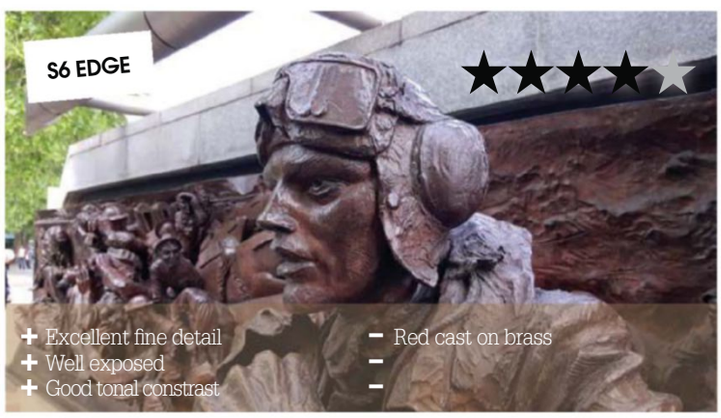
Portrait

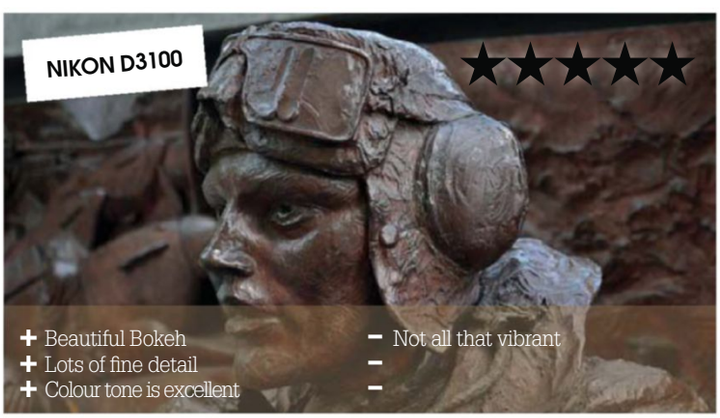
TEST #2

The Battle of Britain monument is deep bronze in colour hiding plenty of fine textural detail, this was a great image to represent those difficult portrait photographs. This test was difficult to evaluate on first impression, as it would appear that the HTC gives the best overall image. Although it veers slightly towards green tones when compared with the benchmark, it feels like the shadows are more natural than the others. Then you zoom in… and it suddenly turns all kinds of ugly. Detail in the dark areas is completely absent, replaced with what looks like artefacts compromising the quality. It's an unusual result that could be because of underexposure or just plain bad low-light performance.

The Samsung offers the best compromise of the two, giving a slightly red cast to the brass but retaining good detail in the skin textures. The HTC almost feels soft by comparison, lacking the sharpness of the Samsung S6 edge. The Apple iPhone was very close behind the HTC, giving a sharp image with good detail and an even exposure. I'm not sure what happened with the LG G4 but the result looks almost unnatural in this portrait image, with a complete lack of tonal information. It could be that the HDR mode kicked into overdrive, which has been left on auto with all cameras by default for fairness. In any case, the dull tonal variation only distracts from what could've been a great image.





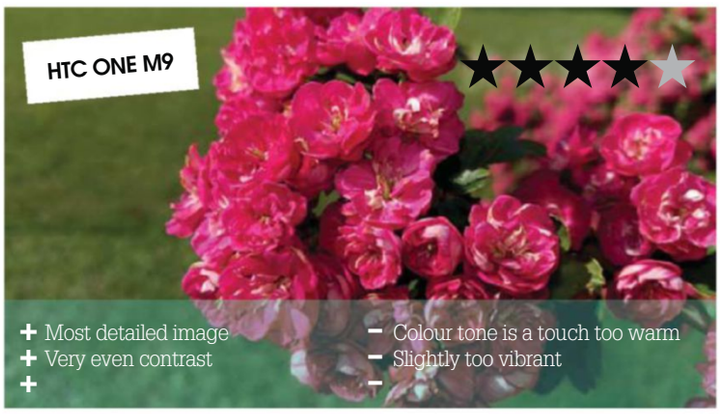


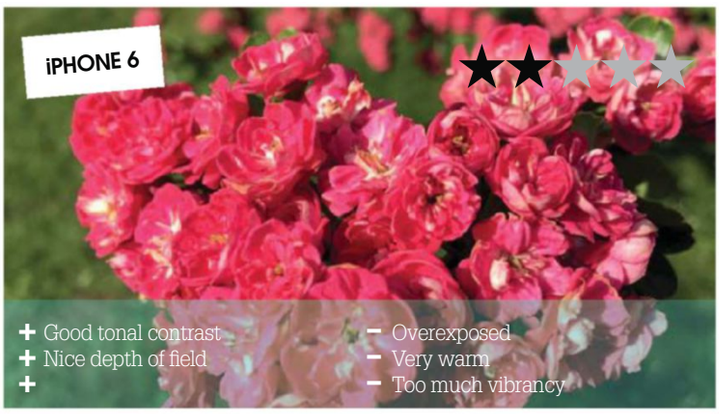
TEST #3

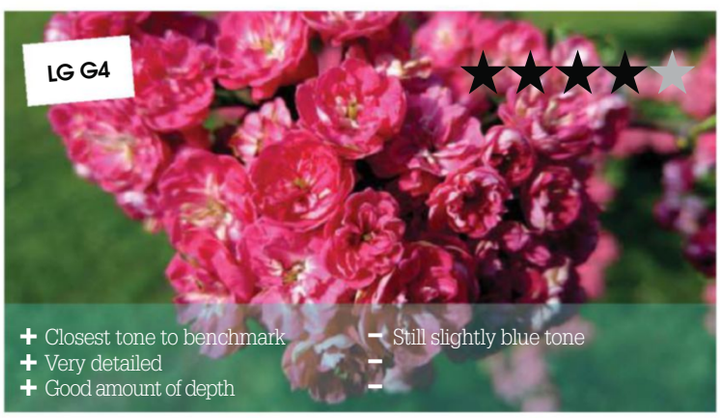
Up close

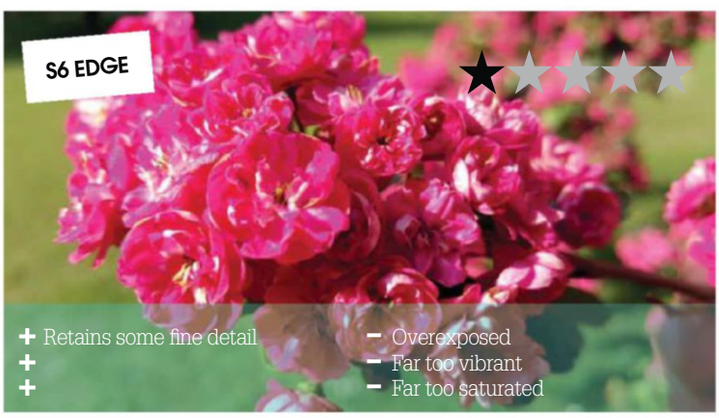
Macro shots are a difficult test for the smartphone cameras. Lower aperture ratings and fixed focal lengths don't give shallow depth of field that makes close-up photography really pop out. Still, a couple of the phones were really good at Macros. Overall detail on all pictures was excellent, with little noise when viewed from an acceptable distance. The winner here is the LG G4, which managed to produce the most natural colours of all the phones on test, coming pretty close to our benchmark picture. It also produced a passable depth of field with some reasonable bokeh, blurring out the background just enough to make the foreground pop. The HTC wasn't far behind, producing a detailed shot with a good depth of field thanks to its bigger f/2.2 aperture. However, the colour tone of the image seemed a little warm, with the grass in particular displaying a yellowish hue.

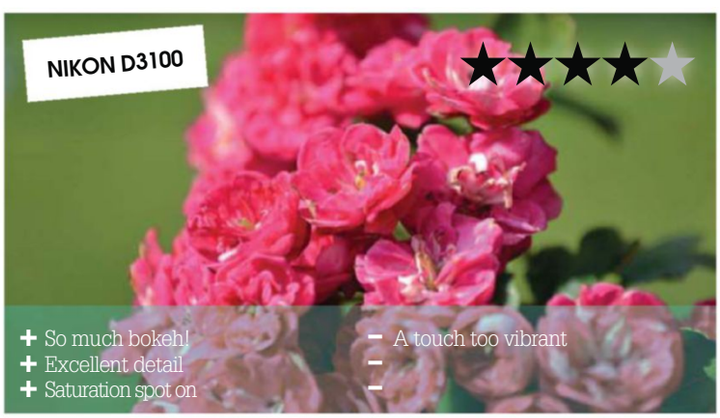
The iPhone 6 struggled to cope in the bright conditions, giving a result that seemed slightly over-exposed with blown out highlights. There was a great deal of vibrancy to the flowers but it bordered on overkill. The Samsung S6 edge took things a step further, producing an even more over-exposed set of shots, despite using manual settings and the lowest possible ISO. The addition of a shutter speed control really would've helped the S6 edge on this occasion.

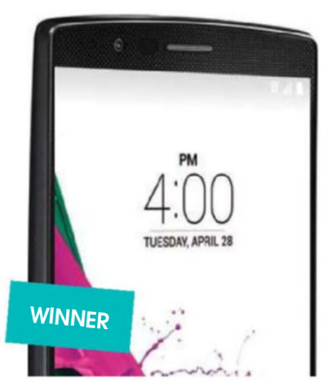










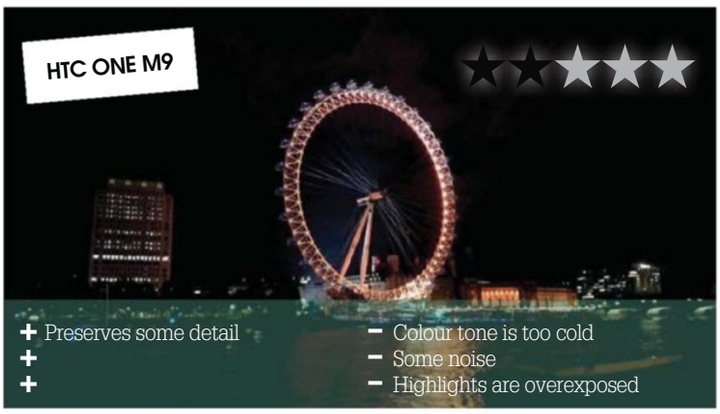


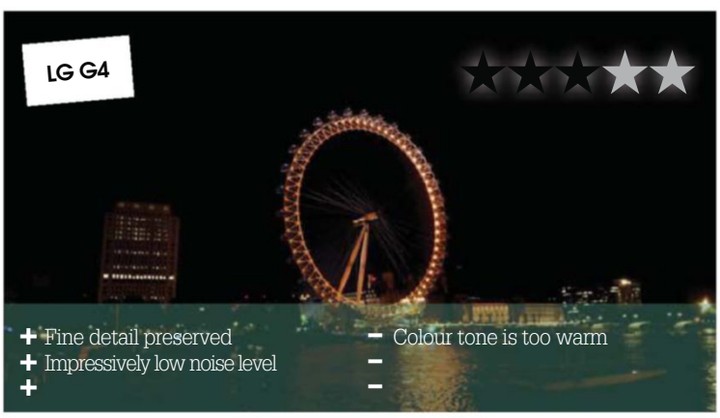
TEST #4

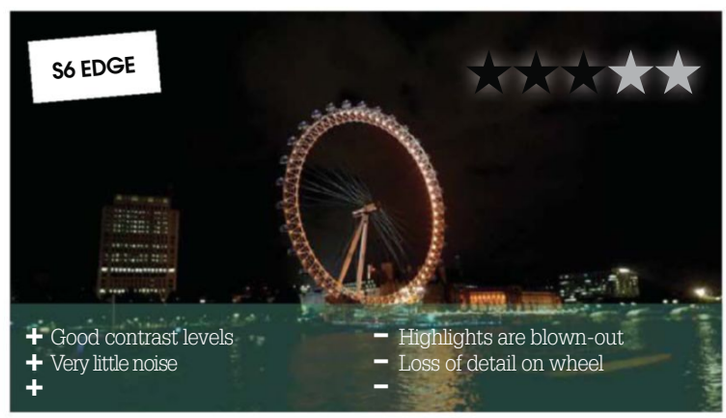
Night time

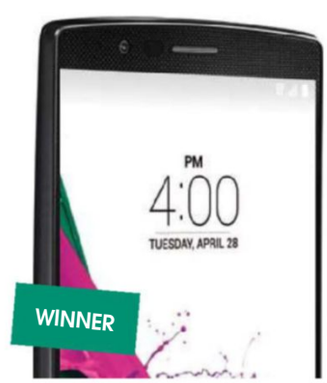
For this test I headed back to the London Eye so that I could replicate the landscape shot from earlier but in a low-light setting. When compared with the benchmark picture, none of the phones got the colour accuracy dead on. The iPhone and HTC both felt a little too cold, whereas on the LG the image veered onto the opposite side of warm despite my best efforts with the settings. Grading white balance by hand is an extremely difficult thing to judge on a tiny phone screen and it is still amazing that phone manufacturers have not yet included a one-touch option for easy calibration. The Samsung S6 edge did slightly better than the rest in colour reproduction but the highlights felt slightly overblown. Since colour inaccuracy is easier to fix post-edit, the win had to go to the LG.

One thing that really impressed me about the LG and Samsung was the ability to retain detail even at higher ISOs. The winning picture from the LG was taken at ISO 400 with a 1/8th shutter time and yet it still managed to remain evenly lit without any motion blur. Risking such a low ISO when shooting night photography is always a problem, as the longer shutter speeds that are needed equate to a greater chance of blurry photos due to things such as camera wobble. With both the LG and the Samsung, I was able to shoot at 400 ISO without any noticeable blur in the image, producing two extremely low-noise images that were surprisingly detailed. It's my guess that the optical image stabilisation really helped out in this scenario.









And the winner is... ...the LG G4

So if you're looking at the results and wondering why this isn't a tie, I've got two words for you: Manual features. The Samsung S6 Edge has a fantastic camera and narrowly outperformed the LG in this test. Yet it can't compare with the LG's ability to tweak every little setting for that perfect image.

The Samsung S6 Edge misses key features like true shutter control and doesn't offer the same level of white balance adjustment that the LG has. Both phones produced excellent images and I was extremely impressed with how the Samsung performed using its own algorithms to select the correct settings. However, in real-world terms, the LG will always be able to get that little closer to perfection thanks to the wealth of shooting options you have at your disposal.

As for the others, they're by no means bad cameras but they can't quite compete with the top two.

The HTC M9 takes great daytime photographs but struggles a little in low-light, which is likely down to the lack of Optical Image Stabilisation.

The iPhone 6 is a great point-and-click shooter but doesn't have any manual features relying on its own auto functions to produce the best image. While it works well most of the time, it can never quite match the accuracy that manual tweaking can provide.

You can download a camera application to compensate for this. But with most phones shipping with some form of manual mode as standard these days, it's a little disappointing.

DSLR VS. SMARTPHONE

When comparing the benchmarks with each smartphone, there's still no competition with the Nikon. Even with an entry-level SLR, you'd be hard pressed to find any phone that can come close to it. For all the technical innovations and computation algorithms, it's the manual settings that add the most to the picture.

Giving these features to smartphones is a huge step in the right direction that needed to happen. They've far exceeded the quality where an auto function can give you satisfactory results every time.

Lara turns Android

A retro classic from the 90s goes mobile and dragons blaze a trail, here's the best games this month

Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn – for full reviews, check out WhatMobile.net

Tomb Raider

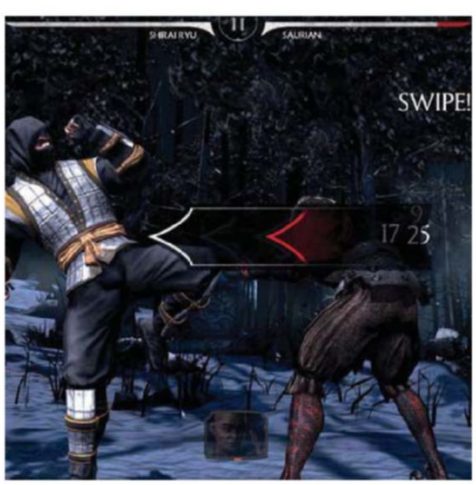
£0.99 (Android)

It's Tomb Raider on your phone! The iconic game from the 90's is now finally available on Android. Square Enix has taken pride in the fact that this is a fully faithful port with no enhancements whatsoever. That means totally original graphics and gameplay. But we're fine with that because if it's not broken, don't fix it!

Mortal Kombat X

Free (iOS)

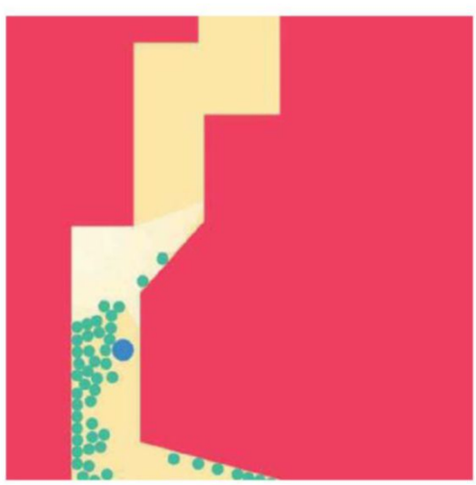
With a hefty 1.5 GB install and a minimum of 1GB ram needed, NeverRealm's classic fighting game is a high resource beast that features a scaled back but still massively impressive experience versus its console counterpart. With a striking resemblance to Injustice in terms of gameplay, if you are a fan of that game, then chances are this will be up your alley too.



The Line Zen

Free (Android, iOS)

Sequel to the 2014 hit game, The Line, it looks almost identical on first glance. The developers have shaken things up a little bit and given you access to a new 'friendly' green tile which can help you traverse each level. The aim of the game remains the same; stay on the yellow line and avoid the red. In principal this sounds ridiculously easy, but in practice it's a totally different matter indeed.



Fruit Ninja: Math Master

£4.00 (Android, iOS)

Pitched as an educational sequel to the massively popular Fruit Ninja, Halfbrick has his sights squarely focused on helping young children learn maths in a fun, engaging way. In this game you guide "Truffles" the pig through various different games modes, all designed to test your child's mathematical skills in a number of different ways. A fun alternative to homework perhaps?

Dragon Blaze

Free (Android, iOS)

A highly anticipated mobile RPG, Dragon Blaze takes the player to Dragon's Landing, where humanity needs your help. After choosing from five hero types, it's time to level up and continue your journey as you recruit key characters along the way. Turn-based mechanics are the order of the day here, but they can be simplified with a fully automatic mode if the player wants it more forgiving.

Goat Simulator: GoatZ

£4.99 (Android, iOS)

Just when you thought Goat Simulator couldn't get any more bizarre, along comes this. GoatZ is what would happen if George A. Romero and Goat Simulator had a baby together. It contains everything that was ridiculous about the original game except now you need to avoid undead hordes while also getting shot out of that cannon. Invulnerability is out this time, so if you want to live keep those health and hunger bars topped up.

Frontline Commando

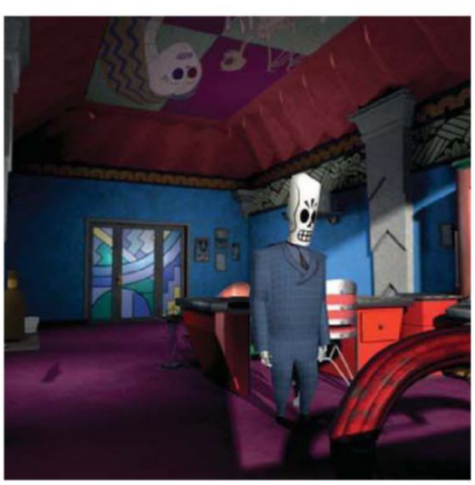
Free (Android, iOS)

There's certainly not a shortage of shooters on mobile but this one deserves a special mention. Set during the Second World War, this sequel to Frontline Commando: D-Day throws the player into various scenarios as you fight to help the Allies take back Europe. Graphics are impressive and the action is fast and frantic. Expect to be fighting in various historical battlefields spanning Belgium, Italy, Germany and more.

Grim Fandango

£7.87 (Android, iOS)

An absolute classic that failed to deliver commercially, it's great to see a remastered version of this unique title finally available on mobile platforms. Grim Fandango is an adventure game set in the fictional 'Land of the Dead' universe, a combination of Casablanca and the Aztec afterlife. This is one game that only gets better with age.



The Barbarian

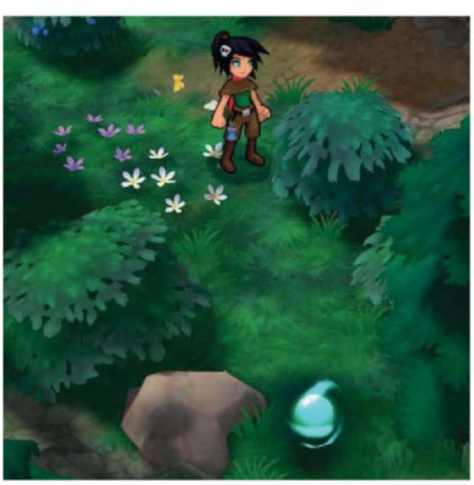
£6.33 (iOS)

Conjuring up fond memories of the old Baldur's Gate titles, Barbarian is a brilliant top-down RPG that's been in production for quite some time. Finally released to the public, it comes jammed packed with over 20 hours of gameplay and 9 huge maps to explore. Even better, it also has full gamepad support, allowing a complete finger-free console-like experience if the player wants total immersion.

Trulon

£3.17 (iOS)

Not just your average card RPG, Trulon is a spin-off story from the original novel of the same name. The gameplay actually feels fairly close to a traditional RPG adventure, featuring an open-world to explore and turn-based battles that feel much more akin to Final Fantasy. With its short bursts of action-packed card battles, Trulon is the perfect companion for your morning work commute.



Split the difference

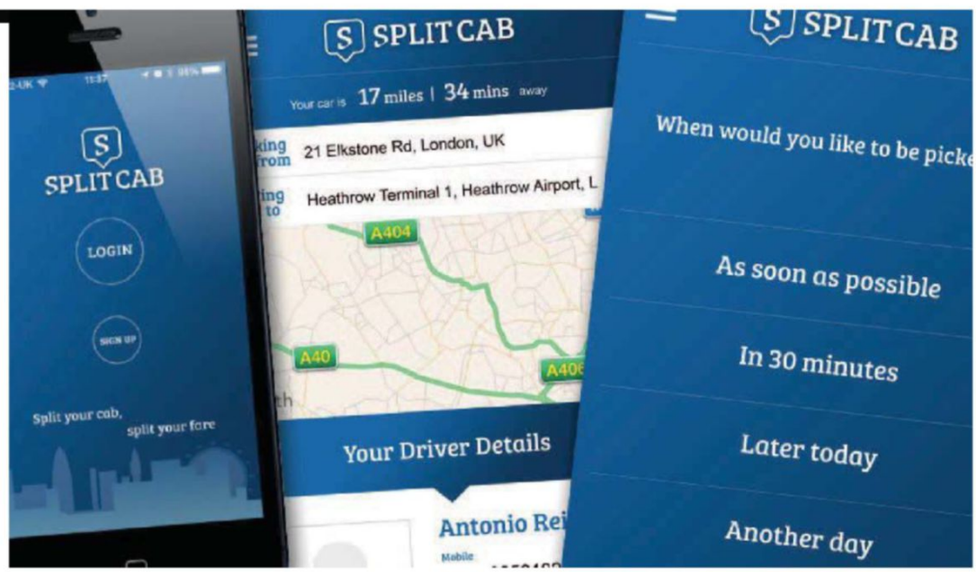
Whether it's personal fitness, sharing a cab or healthy eating our selection of apps cover it all this month

Reviewer: Alex Yau – for full reviews, check out WhatMobile.net

SplitCab

Free (iOS, Android)

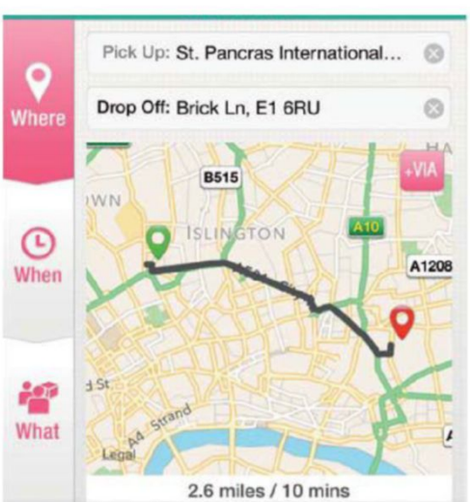
Booking a cab in London can be very expensive. SplitCab is a service that aims to reduce these costs alongside your carbon footprint. Simply book a cab and split the fare with other SplitCab users travelling the same way. The app is easy to use, has vehicle tracking and a points system that gives discounts on future journeys.



Kabbee

Free (Android, BlackBerry, iOS, Windows)

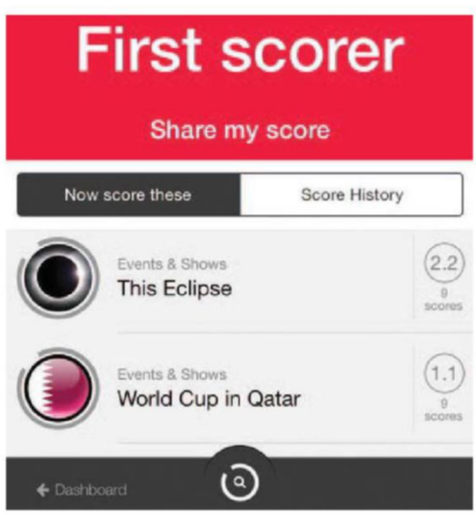
Kabbee is another affordable taxi app that helps you avoid expensive fees. Fares are up to 65 per cent cheaper than a regular black cab and you can book anywhere from five-minutes up to three months. Kabbee uses fixed prices, too, so you needn't worry about fare increases if you get stuck in a long traffic jam.



Just A Score

Free (iOS)

Ever wanted to let the world know what you think of Tesco Apples or Sea Salt Kettle Chips? Just A Score lets you rate just about anything you can think of. No matter how random or bizarre it is. This fun app also lets you follow other users and trends, so you can find out how weird other people's tastes are.



ItsMe Chat

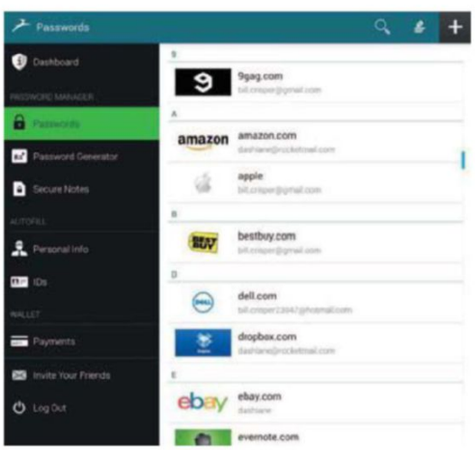
Free (iOS)

ItsMe Chat adds a fun visual element to instant messaging. Simply take a selfie of yourself and customise it with hair, clothes and animations showing your current mood. You can send texts, voice memos, videos and Snapchat-like messages that disappear after a certain time.

Dashlane Password Manager

Free (Android, iOS)

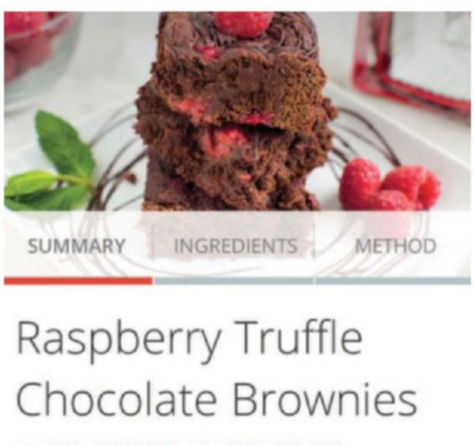
If you're someone with dozens of accounts, then you'll know how time consuming it can be to change your password for them all. Dashlane makes this task easier by changing passwords for all your registered accounts in seconds. Military-grade encryption and a secure login process means you can relax knowing the app will keep all of your passwords very secure.



Forks Over Knives

£3.99 (iOS, Android)

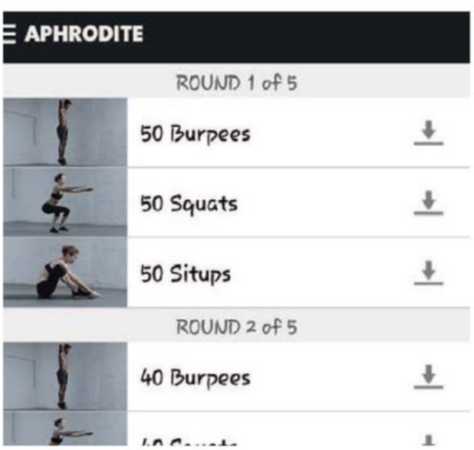
Forks Over Knives makes healthy eating simple. It includes over 180 whole-food, plant-based recipes from 20 leading chefs and provides simple step-by-step instructions on how to prepare them. New recipes added weekly will ensure you never run out of meals to cook.



Freeletics

Free (Android, iOS)

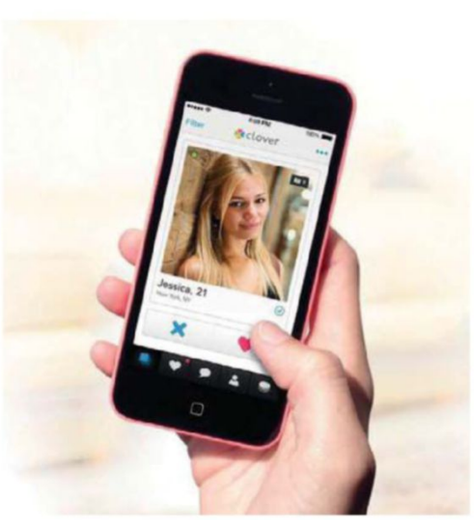
Physical exercise is tough work, but getting the motivation to drag yourself to the gym can be even harder. Freeletics aims to get you fitter with personalised training plans that you can do anywhere using your own bodyweight. Instructional videos show you how to do each exercise and the app even gives you feedback on your weekly progress.



Clover

Free (iOS)

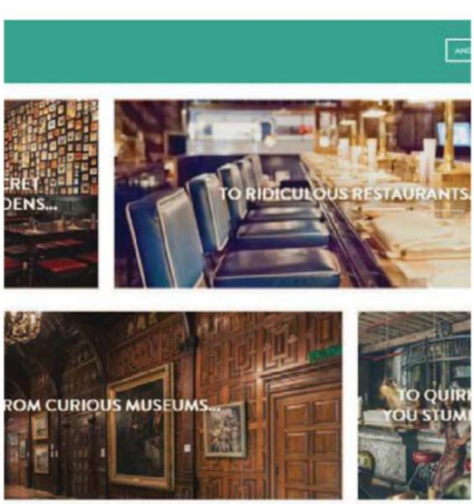
Clover makes the whole process of organising dates simple. Once you've matched with someone you like, either of you can set a place and a time to meet. The other person can agree with just the press of a button. You can sort who you find in the app based on personal preferences and there's no limit on the number of free messages you can send.



Great Little Place

Free (iOS)

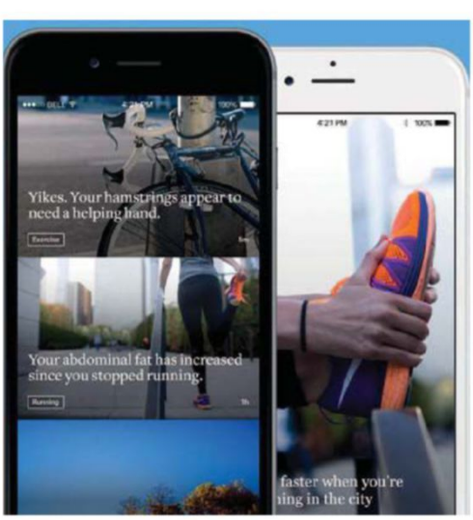
When you're living in a big city, it can be very easy to overlook some of the best local restaurants, bars, pubs or other hidden gems. Great Little Place helps you find local gems by gathering recommendations from locals. Don't like a certain type of cuisine? No problem. You can sort recommendations based on your own personal preference.



Addapp

Free (iOS)

If you're the active sort, Addapp is the perfect fitness companion. It integrates with apps like RunKeeper, Uber, Fitbit and more to give you an insight into your wellbeing. After gathering data, it suggests actions on how to improve sleep, nutrition and health. If it thinks you've worked a muscle too hard, it will even recommend exercises to help soothe it.



Nintendo 3DS

It's been a while but Xenoblade Chronicles 3D has finally made it to 3DS and it was worth the wait

Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn – for full reviews, check out WhatMobile.net

Xenoblade Chronicles 3D

Perhaps a familiar tale for some people, Xenoblade Chronicles 3D is a port of the popular Wii game of the same name. Released way back in 2012, it has now finally come to the 3DS in this very faithful, untouched re-release. You'll be pleased to know that it feels even more at home on the 3DS than it ever did on the Wii.

The basic plot centres around a revenge story and a mysterious sword called the Monado. Long before the events of Xenoblade Chronicles, two god-like figures waged war and perished in battle, with one of them becoming the world in which the characters now call home. Controlling a character named Shulk, you must defend this homeland from robotic monsters known as the Mechon.

Like any Japanese RPG, Xenoblade Chronicles features an impressive open-world environment for the player to explore with over 50+ hours of content and a complex turn-based battling system that eats you alive. And it really does eat you alive; this game is incredibly unforgiving. You will not be treated to healing items during battles or be able to control your allies to dictate the flow of battle. It's a case of picking your place and striking at the opportune moment. Be prepared for many deaths.

Still, don't let it deter you from this excellent game. The locations are gorgeous and the gameplay is engrossing. This is sure to become a commuter favourite of mine.

Fallblox

Fallblox is the third game in the popular Pullblox series, known in Japan as Pushmo. You play as Mallo, a red sumo wrestler visiting Pushmo park. While talking with the caretaker, he learns that a number of children have become trapped in the park and need to be rescued.

As a crazy Japanese puzzle game at heart, it tasks the player with shifting around numerous blocks to create a set of steps so each child can be saved. This third game in the series has added a pretty substantial update to that formula in an effort to spice things up; the puzzles are now fully three dimensional. In Fallblox, objects can now be stretched across a 3D plane and the camera will rotate to navigate the structure. It's a great addition that adds a whole new element of thought to the gameplay.

The only downside to this otherwise brilliant sequel is the payment system, which has shifted to a free-to-play model with the bare minimum content available at initial download. In fact, when you first buy the game, you will only be given a small handful of tutorial levels to keep you busy. If you want to play the rest of the game, be prepared to part with a fair amount of your cold, hard cash. A disappointing addition to an otherwise excellent sequel.

PlayStation Vita

The classic point-and-click adventure Broken Age brings a trippy, cartoony twist to the Vita

Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn – for full reviews, check out WhatMobile.net

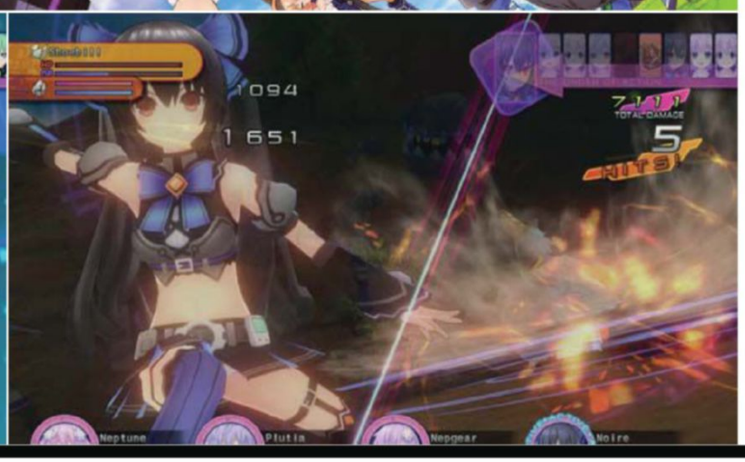
Broken Age

Conjuring up images of the old Monkey Island games, Broken Age is a port of the PS4 version of the same name. As a classic point-and-click adventure at heart, it offers a very philosophical gameplay experience but with a trippy, almost cartoony twist.

You play as two main characters, Shay and Vella. The former spends his time on a spaceship being mothered to the point of boredom by an overbearing computer AI, while the latter comes from a place where women compete every 14 years to be eaten by a monster. It's a bizarre set of stories that you will only come to appreciate when actually playing the game.

From the outset, the first thing you'll notice is the visuals and audio. The graphics represent some truly outstanding 2D design work, with character designs that jump out and backdrops that ooze colours and detail. There's also an abundance of famous voice actors in the game such as Elijah Wood and Jack Black.

The game is divided into two acts; the first serves as an introduction while the second act delves deeper into the story. As with any point-and-click adventure title, the primary game dynamic is to solve a series of intricate puzzles that in turn lead to the next. At 12-13 hours long, it's by no means a short game either. If you never picked this up on the PS4, it's well worth a look on the Vita.



Hyperdimension Neptunia U: Action Unleashed

For such an intrinsically Japanese franchise to enjoy any amount of success on western shores is a rare occurrence, yet the Hyperdimension Neptunia series has managed to be one of those few exceptions. As a franchise that pokes fun at videogames and the culture surrounding them, its appeal is far more universal than most Japanese Games.

Set in a fictional world known as 'Gamindustri', it centres around four goddesses who are locked in a constant battle for 'shares' known as the console war. In Hyperdimension Neptunia U: Action Unleashed, the goddesses are enjoying an unusually calm truce period until Famitsu and Dengekiko propose writing articles about them. In order to give them an interesting angle for their pieces, the goddesses must go out and undertake some exciting quests.

As expected for a hack-n-slash adventure, all of these quests amount to a similar thing; destroy everything in sight. You'll be facing off against Pacman ghosts and more as you fight hundreds of on-screen enemies at once, sometimes with the assistance of an extra goddess. Control can be switched between characters at any time when teaming up and you can choose from all the classic Hyperdimension Neptunia cast. While it's not as deep as some of the other games in the franchise, it serves its purpose as a casual hack-n-slash game commendably.

WHAT MOBILE

BUYER'S GUIDE

Buying a new device can be a difficult decision. Our comprehensive buyer's guide is here to help you.

55 Phone reviews

85 Tablet reviews

94 Wearables reviews

Acer Liquid E2

Reviewed: January 2014, price: £189.99
http://www.acer.co.uk

Stacked up against recent entries in the budget market, the Acer Liquid E2 is simply outdated. It's a functional Android handset but the clunky, thick design makes it feel like you're holding a toy and the software doesn't have any standout features. Acer will have to seriously raise its game if it's to be a contender in the phone market.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor Quad-core 1.2 GHz
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 540 x 960 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8 MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 131 x 68 x 9.9mm
Weight 140g
Battery 2000 mAh

VERDICT: A dated, bulky phone saved by its reasonable price.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★☆☆☆
DESIGN	★½☆☆☆

★★☆☆☆

Acer Liquid Jade

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £199
http://www.acer.co.uk

A decent handset from a smaller brand, the Liquid Jade has all the components in place to be a much better handset than it actually is. What holds it back is Acer's lack of polish when compared to bigger brands like Motorola. The end result is a handset that you could settle for, but probably shouldn't.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.3GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1,280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB/16GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 140.5 x 69 x 7.5mm
Weight 110g
Battery 2,100mAh

VERDICT: A decent low-end handset, but there are too many better alternatives.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Alcatel One Touch Pop S3

Reviewed: September 2014, price: £80
www.alcatelonetouch.com/uk

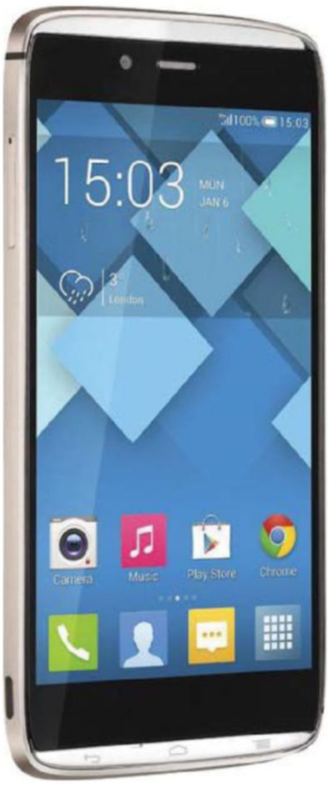
The Alcatel One Touch POP S3 has its merits, especially taking into account the sub-£100 price of the device. The problem here is that by making room for 4G capability Alcatel has been forced to make cutbacks in crucial areas. However, if you are simply after the option to access faster web browsing and app speeds on the go, then the POP S3 offers you that at the cheapest price possible.

OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 4GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 123 x 64.4 x 9.9mm
Weight 130g
Battery 2,000mAh

VERDICT: Cheap, sure, but its poor quality renders its 4G capability near pointless.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★☆☆☆
DESIGN	★★½☆☆

★★☆☆☆



Alcatel One Touch Idol Alpha

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £319
www.alcatelonetouch.com/uk

While it's good to see manufacturers branching out from the traditional black slab design, the Idol Alpha is a reminder of why the slab works. There are just too many compromises here, and the hardware does not make amends for them. Aside from the fact that Android itself is a powerful operating system that you can tailor to your heart's content, there's very little to redeem this phone.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1 GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 1.3MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 138 x 66.6 x 7.5 mm
Weight 117.4 g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A decent camera is the only redeeming feature on this overpriced handset.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★☆☆☆

★★☆☆☆

Alcatel One Touch Idol X+

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £TBC
www.alcatelonetouch.com/uk

We usually greet lesser-known brands with open arms, but never has one disappointed as much as Alcatel with its One Touch Idol X+. Despite decent specs, it's the handsets flaws that hog the limelight. It's outperformed by other handsets in its price bracket in just about every respect. It's hard to envisage anyone patient enough to waste their time with it.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor Octa-core 2GHz
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB or 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 13 MP rear-facing, 2 MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 140.4 x 69.1 x 7.9mm
Weight 130g
Battery 2,500mAh

VERDICT: With such great competition the One Touch Idol X+ simply looks irrelevant.

PERFORMANCE	★☆☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★☆☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★☆☆☆☆

Amazon Fire Phone

Reviewed: December 2014, price: £400

When we first learned of the 3D capabilities of the Amazon Fire Phone we thought it might be a gimmick. Instead, it turned out to be the feature we love the most. Its other interface aspects are riddled with hiccups which can add to some severe usability issues. Its design has some questionable choices, too. It has a lot of potential though, and we're eagerly looking forward to a sequel.

OS Android KitKat 4.4
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.7-inches
Resolution 1,280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB
Storage 32GB
microSD compatible? Yes, up to 64GB
Camera 13MP front-facing, 2.1MP rear-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 139.2 x 66.5 x 8.9mm
Weight 160g
Battery 2,400mAh

VERDICT: A promising yet flawed debut effort, reccommendable only to the curious.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★½
FEATURES	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★½☆
DESIGN	★★★½☆

★★★☆☆

Apple iPhone 5c

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £469 (16GB) £549 (32GB)

If you need a splash of colour in your life and you're already a massive fan of the iOS operating system, then the iPhone 5c is much the same as the previous iPhone 5. There's a slightly upgraded front-facing camera and 4G will work on any UK network, but other than that you're getting the exact same thing. The iPhone 5c is simply around for those of you who love great design without breaking the bank.

OS iOS 7
Processor Dual-core 1.3GHz
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 640 x 1136 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16/32GB
MicroSD Compatible? No
Camera 8 MP rear-facing, 1.2 MP front-facing
Video 1080
Connectivity 4G
Size 12.4 x 59.2 x 9 mm
Weight 132g
Battery 1,510 mAh

VERDICT: It's the most colourful iPhone to date, but it's identical to the iPhone 5.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Apple iPhone 5s

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £549 (16GB) £629 (32GB) £709 (64GB)

With fingerprint identity, 64-bit A7 64-bit chip delivers up to twice the perfomance of the iPhone 4 and 5c, many people will opt to pay the extra £80 or so over the 5c. They'll also get an improved camera with 15 per cent larger sensor and improved low-light capabilies. The True Tone flash incorporates two flashes each matched to different light temperatures so flesh tones are more natural with flash pictures.

OS iOS 7
Processor Dual-core 1.3GHz ARM V8
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 1136 x 640 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB, 32GB or 64GB
MicroSD Compatible? No
Camera 8 MP rear-facing, 1.2 MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 123.8 x 58.6 x 7.6mm
Weight 112g
Battery 1,560 mAh

VERDICT: The gold standard in user-friendly smartphones, with a ton of power to boot.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Apple iPhone 6

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £539

Calling it 'the best iPhone ever' almost seems a little redundant. Of course it's better - it's more powerful, has a better camera, and NFC could soon become a huge deal. We're not quite as keen on the aesthetics of it versus older iPhone designs, but it's still got a wonderful premium build and a beautifully sharp display. The option for greatly expanded storage sizes shouldn't be undervalued, either.

OS iOS8
Processor Apple A8 1.4GHz
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 1334 x 750 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB/64GB/128GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Camera 8 MP iSight rear-facing, 1.2 MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 138.1 x 67 x 6.9 mm
Weight 129g
Battery 1,810 mAh

VERDICT: Bigger and better than ever, just as you'd expect. The definitive iPhone.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Apple iPhone 6 Plus

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £619

It's the iPhone 6, but bigger. That's the only difference, and it comes with all of the ups and downs that you would expect from a phablet. You'll either love or hate the larger screen which, whilst still beautiful, is slightly less sharp than its little brother's. Similarly it might be tough for smaller hands to hold. But then you do get to see more things on screen at once. It's still a remarkable phone though, make no mistake.

OS iOS8
Processor Apple A8 1.4GHz
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB/64GB/128GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Camera 8 MP iSight rear-facing, 1.2 MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 158.1 x 77.8 x 7.1 mm
Weight 172g
Battery 1,810 mAh

VERDICT: A bigger iPhone 6 - it's really that simple. Prefer it or not, it's great regardless.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★

★★★★★

Archos 50 Helium

Reviewed: July 2014, price: £199

archos.com

If the Moto G and Moto E are the gold standard of entry-level and low-cost smartphones, then the 50 Helium is certainly worthy of silver. It's got a nice big screen as well as invaluable 4G capability. It won't set the world alight, but it's a standout in a market awash with cheap, limited handsets.

OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 145 x 71.5 x 8.95mm
Weight 160g
Battery 2,000mAh

VERDICT: A capable alternative to the market-leading Moto G.

PERFORMANCE ★★★½☆
FEATURES ★★★☆☆
USABILITY ★★★★☆
DESIGN ★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

BlackBerry Classic

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £330

uk.blackberry.com

BlackBerry diehards will love the modern touchscreen and keyboard – and even some actual apps, just like a proper smartphone. There are certainly worse handsets you could be issued at work. But there's nothing here to tempt an iPhone, Android or Windows user. For almost everyone other than BlackBerry fans, this phone is just a reminder of how far we've moved on in recent years.

OS BlackBerry OS 10.3.1
Processor Dual-core 1.5GHz Krait
Screen 3.5 inches
Resolution 720 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Rear camera 8MP
Front camera 2MP
Video 1080p @ 30fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 131 x 72.4 x 10.2mm
Weight 177g
Battery 2,515mAh

VERDICT: Difficult to recommend to all but the most ardent of BlackBerry fans.

PERFORMANCE ★★★☆☆
FEATURES ★★★☆☆
USABILITY ★★★☆☆
DESIGN ★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

BlackBerry Passport

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £530
uk.blackberry.com

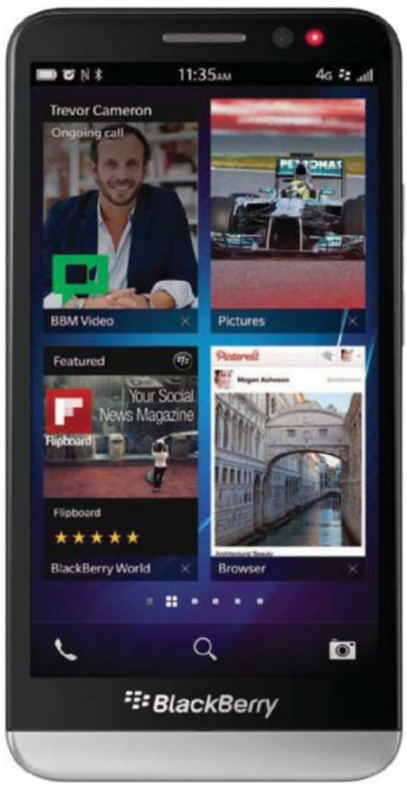
A premium device by anyone's standards - if you can look past the thoroughly odd design. Undeniably BlackBerry's most advanced device ever, it's still clearly angled towards the business crowd with a focus on productivity. The same old BlackBerry problems persist though, with an inferior OS and app store. It's just too impractical and limited for personal use.

OS BlackBerry 10.3
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 1,440 x 1,440 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 128 x 90.3 x 9.3mm
Weight 194g
Battery 3,450mAh

VERDICT: Premium build and top specs are betrayed by off-putting, strange design.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆
FEATURES ★★★★½
USABILITY ★★½☆☆
DESIGN ★★☆☆☆

★★★☆☆



BlackBerry Z30

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £500
uk.blackberry.com

Perhaps if BlackBerry had focused on its efforts on making a phone like this five years ago we would be looking at a very different picture now. As it stands, a barren app store, odd features and a monster price tag may kill what could have been a competitive device. It's still surprisingly easy on the eyes though, and its display doesn't look too bad either.

OS BlackBerry 10
Processor 1.7GHz dual-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-racing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 140.7 x 72 x 9.4
Weight 170g
Battery 2,880 mAh

VERDICT: Possibly the best BlackBerry yet, but that's not saying an awful lot.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆
FEATURES ★★½☆☆
USABILITY ★★★½☆
DESIGN ★★★★☆

★★★☆☆

BWC Stealth V2

Reviewed: August 2014, price: £300
www.bwcdevices.com

With good specs available at low prices there's never been a better time to pick up a rugged smartphone (if that's what you need). The Stealth V2 lives up to both the 'rugged' and 'smart' tags, with surprisingly capable insides. It also passed all of our stress tests, with countless drops, bashes and drownings failing to leave so much as a mark.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 854 x 480 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 1GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.3MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 133 x 69 x 20mm
Weight 230g
Battery 2,800mAh

VERDICT: As smart and tough as it promises.

PERFORMANCE ★★★☆☆
FEATURES ★★★½☆
USABILITY ★★★★☆
DESIGN ★★½☆☆

★★★★☆

CAT B100

Reviewed: March 2014, price: £380
www.catphones.com

The CAT B100 withstands harsh conditions and jarring blows with a tough outer shell that absorbs the impact of falls, and impressive waterproofing. Beyond that, the phone lacks features games and apps - but chances are that's not why you're buying this phone. If you need a rugged handset to take adventuring, though, it's more than tough enough.

OS Nucleus 2.1
Processor 1GHz dual-core
Screen 2.2 inches
Resolution 240 x 320 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 50MB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 3 MP rear-facing, QVGA front-facing
Video QVGA
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 122.94 x 55.88 x 7.6mm
Weight 136g
Battery 1,150 mAh

VERDICT: Tough enough to take into a warzone, if a little light on actual function.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Doro 820 Mini

Reviewed: May 2015, price: £169
www.doro.co.uk

The Doro 820 Mini's software is simple to use; first-time smartphone users and the elderly won't get confused by any cumbersome on-screen options. Unfortunately, this usability has been hampered by hardware problems. A slow processor creates annoying delays when navigating through the phone, whilst a poor build quality ruins what could have otherwise been a decent budget phone.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor 1GHz dual-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5 MP rear-facing, QVGA front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Size 125 x 69.5 x 14.95mm
Weight 170g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A rugged phone for those who need to rely on it in any environment.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Doro Liberto 810

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £145
www.doro.co.uk

The Liberto 810 has a comfortable design and a user interface that's ideal for first-time smartphone users and impaired customers. From there, things start to slip. The screen is buried into the handset, making it hard to accurately press smaller buttons, the camera software has some strange issues and we ran into a few bugs. It's a starting point for Doro, but it's hard to recommend it.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor 1GHz
Screen 3.9 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 500MB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5 MP
Video 480p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 126 x 66 x 12.5mm
Weight 132g
Battery 1,500 mAh

VERDICT: Seniors may be demanding a tailored smartphone, but this isn't it.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★½☆☆

★★☆☆☆

Doro Liberto 820

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £186
www.doro.co.uk

It's easy to dismiss Doro phones as obsolete. This is to ignore that Doro isn't interested in attracting phone geeks and techno-fashionistas. These phones are for those value simplicity above processing power. Doro targets the 'senior' market But with its SOS button and useful short cuts the Liberto 820 will appeal to those are not slaves to trends in consumer electronics.

OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat with Doro Wizard
Processor 1.3Ghz quad-core
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 940 x 560
Memory 1GB
Storage 4GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 13mm x 71mm
Weight 132g
Battery 1,900 mAh

VERDICT: A surprisingly well-featured phone for the more tech-savvy of seniors.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Doro PhoneEasy 624

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £100
www.doro.co.uk

The PhoneEasy 624 is Doro's best feature phone offering for those who want to keep things as simple, while making sure important contacts are only a button push away. It's got a 3G antenna, lengthy battery life, but a needlessly dire camera.

OS Custom
Processor N/A
Screen 2.4 inches
Resolution 320 x 240 pixels
Memory N/A
Storage N/A
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 2MP
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 102 x 52 x 19 mm
Weight 104g
Battery 800 mAh

VERDICT: A well featured phone for the price if you're in the market for that sort of thing.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

EE Kestrel

Reviewed: September 2014, price: £99
www.doro.co.uk

The EE Kestrel is the best entry-level 4G handset on the market and this is in no small part due to Huawei. The manufacturer has built a solid handset that consumers will use beyond its 4G-LTE capability. Although, its weak resolution is a major flaw, it has plenty of other positive attributes including a smooth UI, the ability to handle a vast range of games and decent web and app browsing speeds.

OS Android 4.3 (Jelly Bean)
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 540 x 960 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G, 3G
Dimensions 131 x 65.3 x 7.85mm
Weight 145g
Battery 2,000mAh

VERDICT: A reliable handset that boasts good usability, if underwhelming specs.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★½☆

★★★☆☆

Google Nexus 4

Reviewed: February 2013, price: £239
www.google.com/nexus/4/

It looks a bit dull and devoid of personality, plus storage is limited to 4GB... but that's hardly the point. The Nexus 4 is a tight bit of kit designed to show off Google's latest version of Android. With a terrific quad-core 1.5Ghz processor and 2GB of RAM - there is nothing out there that will stump this smartphone. The lack of 4G is a disappointment, but the phone is an absolute steal at just £239. One of the best Android handsets available.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.5Ghz quad-core
Screen 4.7 inch
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5 MP rear-facing, 1.3MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 107mm x 61mm x 12mm
Weight 100g
Battery 2,100 mAh

VERDICT: Dull and devoid of personality, but high powered and super, super cheap.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★☆
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★☆☆

★★★★★

Google Nexus 6

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £499
www.google.com/nexus/6/

The Nexus 6 is a reminder of exactly what so many manufacturers are doing wrong by overly modifying Android. Google's flagship is a tremendous powerhouse - more of a media hub than a mere smartphone, and one of the best phablets on the market. Whether you'd rather it had a stylus is a matter of preference, though.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor 2.7 GHz quad-core
Screen 5.96 inches
Resolution 2560 x 1440 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32/64GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 4K
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 82.98 mm x 159.26 mm x 10.06 mm
Weight 184g
Battery 3,220 mAh

VERDICT: Fast, fresh and tremendously powerful. A dream for Android purists.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★☆
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★☆☆

★★★★★

HTC Desire 500

Reviewed: January 2014, price: £199
www.htc.com/uk

The HTC Desire 500 is a respectable budget offering from the Taiwanese manufacturer but it's been undercut by cheaper phones with better specifications. You'll struggle with limited storage space but it earns points for a unique design.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.3 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8 MP rear-facing, 1.6 MP front-facing
Video 720
Dimensions 131.8 x 66.9 x 9.9mm
Weight 123g
Battery 1,800 mAh

VERDICT: A solid phone with a price tag on the wrong side of that of the Moto G.

PERFORMANCE ★★☆☆☆
FEATURES ★★☆☆☆
USABILITY ★★½☆☆
DESIGN ★★★½☆

★★☆☆☆

HTC Desire 816

Reviewed: October 2014, price: £300
www.htc.com/uk

In a market lacking a viable midrange phablet the HTC Desire 816 stands out. It might have its flaws, but for the price you can certainly look past them. If you can't, then a midrange device probably isn't for you. For the rest of us, there's no better option for getting your hands on a jumbo screen on the cheap.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.6GHz quad-core
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1.5GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 156.6 x 78.7 x 7.9mm
Weight 165g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: A triumphant, large addition to a fantastic 2014 product line for HTC.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

HTC Desire 820

Reviewed: June 2015, price: £299
www.htc.com/uk

A large display, fantastic cameras and attractive design makes the HTC Desire 820 an ideal choice if you're after an affordable phone with plenty of features. It's only been let down by the fact that it doesn't pack an HD screen and that it doesn't run the latest Android software. It's also quite pricey compared to the OnePlus One; a phone that is a serious rival.

OS Android 4.4.2 KitKat
Processor Quad-core 1.5 GHz Cortex-A53
Screen 5.5-inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Rear camera 13MP
Front camera 8MP
Video 1080p at 30fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 157.7 x 78.7 x 7.7 mm
Weight 155g
Battery 2600 mAh

VERDICT: Cheap, attractive and packed full of features.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★☆☆

HTC Desire Eye

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £365
www.htc.com/uk

Whilst we love the cameras (having a front-facer as highly powered as the rear-facer is a huge boon, particularly for selfie-lovers) the Desire Eye's build quality and price make it a tougher sell than you might think. It does look nice though, and is an interesting concept. Just not a 100% successful one.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.3 GHz quad-core
Screen 5.2 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 13MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 151.7 x 73.8 x 8.5 mm
Weight 154g
Battery 2,400 mAh

VERDICT: A hard sell when the superior One M8 can now be bought for the same price.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

HTC One M8

Reviewed: May 2014, price: £530
www.htc.com/uk

The HTC One M8 is, in all probability, the best smartphone ever made. It both looks and performs better than almost everything else out there. Features like Blinkfeed and knock-to-wake are a joy to use. If Apple, Sony and Samsung weren't paying attention before, they certainly are now.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.3GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB or 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 4 MP UltraPixel rear-facing, 5 MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 146.36 x 70.6 x 9.35 mm
Weight 160g
Battery 2,600 mAH

VERDICT: If you can afford it, buy it. There's no better Android handset on the market.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

HTC One M9

Reviewed: May 2015, price: £580
www.htc.com/uk

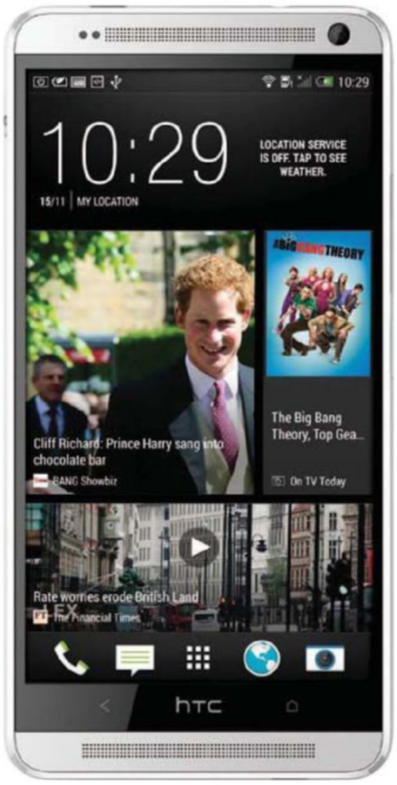
The One M9 is HTC's first major release of 2015 and its top-notch build quality, powerful processor and phenomenal battery life makes it one of our favourite phones of this year. However, it doesn't really provide anything different to what flagship rivals like the iPhone 6 already offers. Despite that, the HTC One M9 is still one of the best looking and most powerful phones on the market.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor 4 x 2GHz + 4 x 1.5GHz octa-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 3 GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 4MP UltraPixel front-facing
Video 4k
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 144.6 x 69.7 x 9.61mm
Weight 157g
Battery 2,840mAh

VERDICT: It has no unique selling point, but it's still one of the best devices out there.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★½
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★



HTC One Max

Reviewed: January 2014, price: £599
www.htc.com/uk

The HTC One Max piggybacks the reputation of the HTC One, although nothing much has improved. The high-quality display is present but HTC has failed to add processing power and the fingerprint sensor implementation is very disappointing.

OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.7GHz quad-core
Screen 5.9 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB
Storage 16GB or 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 4 MP UlatraPixel rear-facing, 2.1 MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 164.5 x 82.5 x 10.3mm
Weight 217g
Battery 3,300mAh

VERDICT: The HTC One's design is still a standout but there's nothing new here.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

HTC One Mini 2

Reviewed: August 2014, price: £360

www.htc.com/uk

Your opinion of the One Mini 2 will come down to what you mostly use your phone for. If you don't put too much strain on its struggling processor then you should be fine. It's got a magnificent pair of cameras, and that trademark HTC metal unibody build can't be beat. Day-to-day users will be more than satisfied - hardcore tech-heads should stick with the One M8.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1,280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 13 MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 137.4 x 64 x 10.6mm
Weight 137g
Battery 2,110mAh

VERDICT: Powered to match its stature, but still a very polished, attractive device.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★☆

Huawei Ascend G7

Reviewed: May 2015, price: £205

www.huaweidevice.co.uk

With a large screen and the gorgeous looks that remind us of the iPhone 6; the Huawei Ascend G7 might look good on the outside, but the software is another story. Huawei has redesigned Google's vanilla Android operating system and reskinned it as something that looks both cheap and ugly. Despite that, the Ascend G7 is a decent choice if you want an iPhone 6-lookalike that runs Android software.

OS Android 4.4.2 KitKat
Processor 1.2 GHz quad-core
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 13 MP rear-facing, 5 MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 153.5 x 77.3 x 7.6mm
Weight 165g
Battery 3,000mAh

VERDICT: Its great performance is ruined cheap and ugly looking operating system.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Huawei Ascend P6

Reviewed: October 2013, price: £309.95

www.huaweidevice.co.uk

It suffers from poor software implementation and a slow-charging battery, but at least the P6 looks the part, with a slim design that makes it more attractive than many of its rivals. Elsewhere this is a capable mid-to-high-tier handset for anyone looking.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.5 GHz quad-core
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8 MP rear-facing, 5 MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 132.7 x 65.5 x 6.2 mm
Weight 120g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: It trips up on software and battery but the slim look is appealing.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Huawei Ascend P7

Reviewed: July 2014, price: £365
www.huaweidevice.co.uk

The Ascend P7 feels like a missed opportunity. Huawei should have put their full weight into creating a top-level flagship handset. However, its underpowered processor is its only real flaw. It looks premium, and its front-facing camera is the best on the market. Its price could be a sticking point, but it's by no means a bad device.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.8GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1980 x 1020 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 8MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 139.8 x 68.8 x 6.5mm
Weight 124g
Battery 2,500mAh

VERDICT: It's not quite a market-leading flagship, but at least it looks the part.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆
FEATURES ★★★½☆
USABILITY ★★★★☆
DESIGN ★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Kazam Tornado 348

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £247
www.kazam.mobi

Despite great looks and smooth performance, lack of 4G connectivity and storage makes the Tornado 348 something of a non-starter for serious users. The casual market will be plenty content with what's on offer here - particularly those eye-catching physical dimensions.

OS Android KitKat 4.4
Processor 1.7Ghz octa-core
Screen 4.8 inches
Resolution 1280x720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Rear camera 8MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 139.8 x 67.5 x 5.15mm
Weight 95.5g
Battery 2,050 mAh

VERDICT: Standout design and performance at an attractive price.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆
FEATURES ★★★★☆
USABILITY ★★★☆☆
DESIGN ★★★★★

★★★☆☆

Kazam Thunder Q4.5

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £TBC
www.kazam.mobi

The Thunder Q4.5 is a sure case of style over substance, but in the lower-cost end of the market you'd usually be lucky to get either. While the phone lacks standout features it won't let you down when it comes to everyday smartphone functionality. If you're in the market and want to try something new, you could certainly do an awful lot worse.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.3GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 854 x 480 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 1.74GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8 MP rear-facing, 2 MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 136 x 64.6 x 8.9 mm
Weight 137g
Battery 1,800 mAh

VERDICT: It may be flawed, but at this price point you'd be hard pushed to beat it.

PERFORMANCE ★★★½☆
FEATURES ★★½☆☆
USABILITY ★★★½☆
DESIGN ★★★★☆

★★★☆☆

LG G2

Reviewed: November 2013, price: £500
www.lg.com/uk

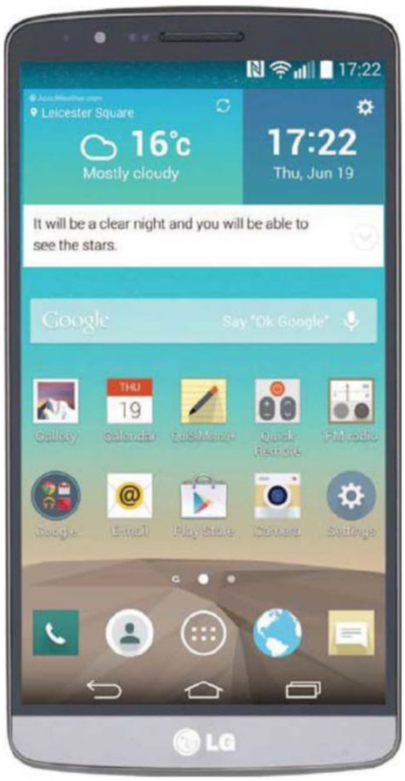
Despite its impressive performance, long-lasting battery and excellent screen, the G2 doesn't quite hold up next to its competition. It doesn't lag behind in any one area, but it doesn't truly excel anywhere else either. It won't give you any hassle aside from its heating issues but this isn't a best-in-class phone, and that's what a flagship from a company like this really should be.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5.2 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB or 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2.1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 138.5 x 70.9 x 8.9 mm
Weight 143g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: The G2 is a powerhouse with a great screen and impressive battery life.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆



LG G3

Reviewed: August 2014, price: £499
www.lg.com/uk

Only minor detractions stop the LG G3 from being the perfect smartphone. That said, there's no such thing as the perfect smartphone just yet, so the G3 is still a wonderful piece of kit. It has outstanding features, hardware, and form to boot. The best display around, a monstrous processor and a variety of little touches all make the G3 is a special smartphone.

OS Android 4.4 (KitKat)
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core
Screen 5.5 inches **Resolution** 1440 x 2560 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB or 32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2.1MP front-facing
Video 2160p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 146.3 x 74.6 x 8.9mm
Weight 149g
Battery 3,000mAh

VERDICT: Want the best? The G3 is absolutely deserving of your consideration.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★½

★★★★★

LG G Flex

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £570
www.lg.com/uk

The curved display may add very little, but with a state-of-the-art spec sheet and a fantastic display, the LG G Flex nails the basics of a high-end smartphone. However the £570 price and so-so camera make it difficult to recommend - at least when compared to its cheaper, better rivals. The Flex just isn't the innovation LG believe it to be.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 6 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? No
Camera 13 MP rear-facing, 2.1 MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 160.5 x 81.6 x 7.9 mm
Weight 177g
Battery 3,500 mAh

VERDICT: A powerful phone held back by a steep price for an unnecessary gimmick.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Motorola Moto E (2015)

Reviewed: May 2015, price: £109
www.motorola.co.uk

Paying £109 for a full-blown, powerful 4G smartphone is seriously good value for money. This value is only increased by a high-quality camera, powerful processor and excellent battery life. The only major faults we found when testing the phone included no LED camera flash, a plastic body that easily picks up marks and a fiddly SIM-card slot.

OS Android 5.0.2 Lollipop
Processor Qualcomm Snapdragon 410, 1.2 GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 540 X 960 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 640 x 480 front-facing
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 129.9 x 66.8mm, 146g
Weight 145g
Battery 2,390 mAh

VERDICT: After a smartphone that's seriously good value? This is for you.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Motorola Moto G

Reviewed: January 2014, price: £135
www.motorola.co.uk

The Moto G is a budget smartphone done right. It makes smart and sensible sacrifices to slash its price to a point that puts its rivals to shame. For people who don't demand the highest specs and best camera from a phone, the Moto G's easy-to-use system and fast speeds make it an ideal choice.

OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB/16GB
MicroSD Compatible? No
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 1.3MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 129.9 x 65.9 x 11.6mm
Weight 143g
Battery 2,070 mAh

VERDICT: The best option for customers on a budget.

PERFORMANCE	★★★½☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Motorola Moto G (2014)

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £150
www.motorola.co.uk

It's an updated version of the Moto G - nothing more, nothing less. The lack of 4G is extremely disappointing, and a processor upgrade would have been nice. Still, a bigger screen, a better camera and microSD compatibility is extremely welcome. When it comes to affordable phones that can actually perform, the Moto G is still untouchable.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB/16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 32GB
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 141.5 x 70.7 x 11mm
Weight 149g
Battery 2,070mAh

VERDICT: A solid improvement on the best, but no 4G gives it a limited shelf life.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Motorola Moto G 4G

Reviewed: June 2015, price: £150
www.motorola.co.uk

One of the best value smartphones on the market, the large display, 4G connectivity and latest Android operating software makes it well worth the price. Combine all of this with the phone's fantastic build quality and the Motorola Moto G 4G is well worth keeping after your contract expires.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor Quad-core 1.2 GHz Cortex-A53
Screen 5.0-inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8/16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Rear camera 8MP
Front camera 2MP
Video 720p at 30fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 141.5 x 70.7 x 11 mm
Weight 155g
Battery 2390 mAh

VERDICT: Priced between £200 - £400, this smartphone undermines the competition.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Motorola Moto X

Reviewed: March 2014, price: £380
www.motorola.co.uk

The Moto X is a rock-solid handset with unique, helpful features. This is the best place to experience Google Now, making voice operation genuinely useful. MIx in a sleek design, great camera and long battery life and the £380 price tag is justified. If you can afford the extra £150 then it makes for a sterling upper-mid tier upgrade to the Motorola Moto G.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.7GHz dual-core
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB/32GB
MicroSD Compatible? No
Camera 10MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 129.3 x 65.3 x 10.4mm
Weight 130g
Battery 2,200 mAh

VERDICT: For those looking to step up from the budget tier: your search is over.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Motorola Moto X (2014)

Reviewed: January 2015, price: £420
www.motorola.co.uk

Motorola's original Moto X was a nice idea executed a little too late, especially in the UK. Competition from superior phones from manufacturers with a stronger recent track record was too great to overcome. But this latest version of the Moto X makes a much stronger case for your cash. It's got some excellent features and will surely be beloved by hardcore fans of stock Android.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core
Screen 5.2 inches
Resolution 1,080 x 1,920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16/32GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 2160p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 140.8 x 72.4 x 10mm
Weight 144g
Battery 2,300 mAh

VERDICT: The best Motorola ever, and arguably the best Android handset of 2014.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Nokia Asha 302

Reviewed:November 2012, price: £95
www.nokia.com

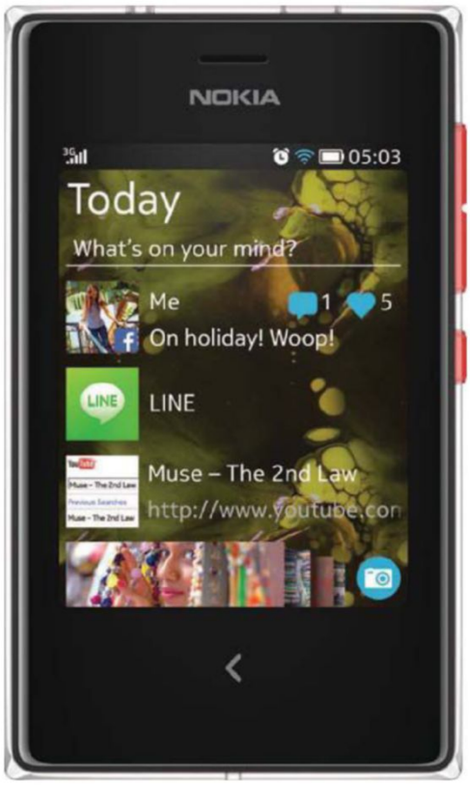
While the Nokia Asha 302 won't win any awards for originality or features, its great build quality, battery life and usability make it ideal for social networking. If you're looking for a decent feature-phone for easy all-day typing, the Asha 302 could be right for you. And while you can pick up a good smartphone for around this price, the handy QWERTY keyboard is ideal if you're frequently typing texts and emails.

OS Nokia Series 40
Processor 1GHz single-core
Screen 2.4 inches
Resolution 240 x 320 pixels
Memory 128MB RAM
Storage 100MB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 3.2MP rear-facing
Video 480p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 117 x 56 x 14mm
Weight 99g
Battery 1,430 mAh

VERDICT: Great QWERTY usability and an impressive battery life at a decent price.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆



Nokia Asha 503

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £70
www.nokia.com

Nokia's Asha 503 is a brilliantly tiny handset that stays usable despite the smaller screen. If you want a dirt-cheap phone then you might be better off with a sub-£50 handset and its design is a little spiky. But anyone looking for a phone to keep them busy for five minutes on a bus will find plenty to love here.

OS Nokia Asha platform 1.2
Processor N/A
Screen 3 inches
Resolution 240 x 320 pixels
Memory 128MB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5 MP rear-facing
Video QVGA
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 102.6 x 60.6 x 12.7mm
Weight 110.2g
Battery 1,200 mAh

VERDICT: A good entry into the budget market that offers more than the basics.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Nokia Lumia 520

Reviewed: June 2013, price: £99.95
www.nokia.com

A good budget offering from Nokia which is let down by its struggles to handle the tasks required of it. Cheaper than the 620 which nevertheless had less performance issues. The 520 packs a good camera and battery life, however there are both cheaper phones which perform better and more expensive phones which don't.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 1GHz dual-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 800 x 480
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Cameras 5 MP
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 119.9 x 64 x 9.9mm
Weight 124g
Battery 1,430 mAh

VERDICT: A good camera, battery and price but the phone can struggle with tasks.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★☆☆

Nokia Lumia 625

Reviewed: October 2013, price: £180

www.nokia.com

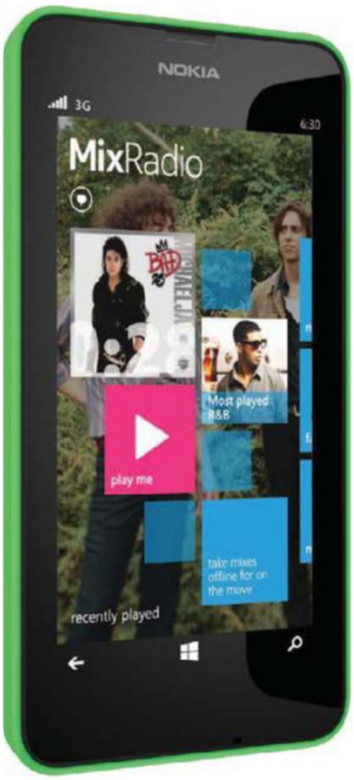
The sizeable 4.7-inch screen saves the 625 from its disappointingly short battery life and lack of HD viewing. It's plagued further by the Lumia range's other issues like a limited app store, but fights back with a decent camera. As a result it stands as a viable budget-range phone.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 1.2GHz dual-core
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 512 MB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5 MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G-LTE
Dimensions 133.3 x 72.3 x 9.2 mm
Weight 159g
Battery 2,000mAh

VERDICT: A decent budget smartphone with its fair share of shortcomings.

PERFORMANCE ★★★☆☆
FEATURES ★★★☆☆
USABILITY ★★★★☆
DESIGN ★★★★☆

★★★★☆



Nokia Lumia 630

Reviewed: August 2014, price: £110

www.nokia.com

The Lumia 630 offers many positives. Its bright, smooth interface is eye-catching and capable, and it can perform most tasks well. It even beats its rival, the Moto E, in terms of apps browsing, gaming and photography. It is let down by some shortcomings though, such as a narrow selection of apps and unnecessary bloatware.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 480 x 854 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 5MP rear-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 129.5 x 66.7 x 9.2mm
Weight 134g
Battery 1,830mAh

VERDICT: Looks good and performs well enough to beat out some of its budget rivals

PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆
FEATURES ★★★★☆
USABILITY ★★★½☆
DESIGN ★★½☆☆

★★★☆☆

Nokia Lumia 720

Reviewed: July 2013, price: £299

www.nokia.com

A fairly solid mid-tier offering which suffered some setbacks at start up, the 720 features a Carl Zeiss lens and a slightly better looking screen and performing processor. Aside from this, the Lumia 720 isn't wonderfully different from its lower priced siblings and showed signs of wear and tear after a week, although its camera lives up to the Lumia name. Microsoft's app store is still fairly limited, however.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 1GHz dual-core
Screen 4.3 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Cameras 6.7MP front-facing, 1.3MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 127.9 x 67.5 x 9mm
Weight 128g
Battery 2,000mAh

VERDICT: A fairly solid mid-tier device but not too different from lower priced siblings.

PERFORMANCE ★★★☆☆
FEATURES ★★★☆☆
USABILITY ★★★★☆
DESIGN ★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Nokia Lumia 735

Reviewed: December 2014, price: £299

www.nokia.com

Microsoft has produced a genuine rival to the bestselling Motorola Moto G in the form of the Lumia 735. With the introduction of an HD display and 4G LTE this is much more than just another selfie phone. But if selfies are what you're after the Lumia 735 offers plenty of fun ways to snap images of you and your friends with its 5-megapixel front camera.

OS Windows Phone 8.1
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 1,280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 6.7MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 134.7 x 68.5 x 8.9mm
Weight 134g
Battery 2,200mAh

VERDICT: A Windows Phone to match the Moto G, the 735 is a selfie star.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆
FEATURES ★★★★☆
USABILITY ★★★★☆
DESIGN ★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Nokia Lumia 830

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £267

www.nokia.com

The Nokia Lumia 830 is not quite the swan-song we were hoping for. It's not hugely affordable, and nor does the phone's hardware make full use of that 4G connectivity. Mid-range mobiles seldom convince us of their reason to exist and this final Nokia is no exception. It does look the part, and Cortana is improving, but there are simply better options out there.

OS Windows Phone 8.1
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 10MP rear-facing, 0.9MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 139.4 x 70.7 x 8.5 mm
Weight 150g
Battery 2,200 mAh

VERDICT: Underpowered and overpriced, the Lumia 830 is average and forgettable.

PERFORMANCE ★★★☆☆
FEATURES ★★★☆☆
USABILITY ★★★★☆
DESIGN ★★★★☆

★★★☆☆

Nokia Lumia 925

Reviewed: August 2013, price: £479

www.nokia.com

With the Lumia 925 Nokia haven't set out to reinvent the wheel, they've just built on their past achievements to put together a brilliant phone. A gorgeous slimmed-down design, high performance camera and responsive user interface all set this handset apart from the rest of the Lumia range and make it a top level device in the high-end smartphone market. One of the best out there.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 1.5GHz dual-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution: 1280 x 760
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB/32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.3MP front-facing
Video: 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 129 x 70.6 x 8.5 mm
Weight: 139g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A fantastic camera, slick design and great user interface make this top dog.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆
FEATURES ★★★★☆
USABILITY ★★★★☆
DESIGN ★★★★½

★★★★★

Nokia Lumia 930

Reviewed: September 2014, price: £420

www.nokia.com

The plus side for those looking for something different is that Windows Phone has come along enough now that its mere presence on a handset isn't enough to relegate it completely. The Lumia 930 is the flagship that the range has been crying out for for far too long now, and if you don't mind having a relatively restricted ecosystem then you should have very few issues with it.

OS Windows Phone 8.1
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Camera 20MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 137 x 71 x 9.8mm
Weight 167g
Battery 2,420mAh

VERDICT: The closest to rivalling Android and iOS that Windows Phone has ever come.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★½
DESIGN	★★★★½

★★★★☆

Nokia Lumia 1020

Reviewed: November 2013, price: £639.99

www.nokia.com

The Lumia 1020 is an ideal smartphone for those of you who don't care about apps and it's perfect if you love to take great pictures. It might not be the slimmest device you can get your hands on but the 1020's powerful camera is well worth the extra bulk.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 1.5GHz dual-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution: 1280 x 760
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 41MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video: 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 130.4 x 71.4 x 10.4 mm
Weight: 158g
Battery 2,000 mAh battery

VERDICT: A top smartphone with an astounding camera – one of the best.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★½
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Nokia Lumia 1320

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £280

www.nokia.com

The Lumia 925 and 1020 were large enough, and the lack of software taking advantage of the big display, unlike with the Samsung Galaxy Note, means those extra inches just leave you looking faintly ridiculous when answering a call. You're better off spending your money on an Android phablet or Google's Nexus 5.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 1.7GHz dual-core
Screen 6 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G-LTE
Dimensions 164.2 x 85.9 x 9.8mm
Weight 220g
Battery 3,400 mAh

VERDICT: A good phone, but the Nexus 5 simply undercuts the competition too well.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★☆☆

Nokia Lumia 1520

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £550

www.nokia.com

Although the Nokia Lumia 1520 weighs in at a whopping £550 (SIM-free), it could cost you considerably more to purchase a standalone camera, camcorder, satnav, tablet and a laptop computer that can run Microsoft Office.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 6 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 20MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G-LTE
Dimensions 162.8 x 85.4 x 8.7mm
Weight 209g
Battery 3,200 mAh

VERDICT: A great all-in-one device that mashes the best of Nokia together.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

OnePlus One

Reviewed: June 2015, price: £269

www.oneplus.net

If you're not bothered about Samsung, Apple or any of the other big brand names, then we highly recommend the OnePlus One. It offers class-leading specs for half the price of an iPhone 6 or Samsung Galaxy S6. That attractive price is topped off by excellent build quality and unlimited customisation options.

OS Cyanogenmod version of Android 4.4
Processor 2.5Ghz quad-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 801
Screen 5.5 inches Gorilla Glass 3
Resolution 1920 x 1080
Memory 3GBRAM
Storage 64GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Rear camera 13MP
Front camera 5MP
Connectivity 4G, dual-band wi-fi, Bluetooth 4.0, NFC, GOS antenna
Video 1080 HD
Dimensions 152.9 x 75.9 x 8.9mm
Weight 162g
Battery 3100 mAh

VERDICT: A top-spec smartphone for half the price of the iPhone 6? Yes please!

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Prestigio MultiPhone 5430

Reviewed: November 2013, price: £190

www.prestigio.com

The Prestigio MultiPhone 5430 is a bland piece of kit that lacks any real highlights, but is undoubtedly a capable and efficient smartphone. Perhaps its best feature is that it gets the core experience right, if not groundbreakingly so. The very basics of what you expect from a smartphone in 2013 are here but there isn't much else.

OS Android 4.0 Ice Cream Sandwich
Processor Intel Atom 1.2GHz
Screen 4.3 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 0.3MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 126 x 64.7 x 10mm
Weight 140g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: Perfectly ordinary – but it's positioned as an everyday smartphone.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★☆☆☆

★★★☆☆

Prestigio 4500 DUO

Reviewed: June 2013, price: £179

www.prestigio.com

The Prestigio fails to dazzle, offering nothing fresh, but it is a user friendly, well featured and well priced device that ticks all the right boxes for a smartphone. It offers a smooth Android experience in a classic design with a competitive price tag and could go up against the likes of Huawei or HTC's budget brands. A solid offering from a lesser known brand.

OS Android 2.3 Gingerbread
Processor 1.2GHz dual-core
Screen 3.5 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 480p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 117 x 59 x 11mm
Weight 120g
Battery 1,850 mAh

VERDICT: Nothing new but this is a user friendly, well priced well featured device.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆
FEATURES ★★★☆☆
USABILITY ★★★★☆
DESIGN ★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Samsung Ativ S

Reviewed: March 2013, price: £439.99

www.samsung.com/uk

Possibly the best looking Windows Phone 8 physically with a good display, and a very usable Windows Phone 8 device, the software is lazy, with a poor selection of apps and what apps there are, can appear less than appealing. However, the user interface is easy to use and the processor can handle whatever is required of it. The phone looks and feels good - it's just a pity there's not much to look at, app-wise.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 1.5GHz dual-core
Screen 4.8-inch
Resolution 720 x 1280
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB/32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Cameras 8.0MP rear-facing, 1.9MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 137 x 70.5 x 8.7 mm
Weight 135g
Battery 2,300 mAh

VERDICT: Great WP8 hardware, but the lack of apps means Nokia and HTC still rule.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆
FEATURES ★★☆☆☆
USABILITY ★★★★☆
DESIGN ★★★★★

★★★★☆

Samsung Galaxy Ace 2

Reviewed: October 2012, price: £240

www.samsung.com/uk

In a year where Samsung crafted one of the world's best smartphones with the Galaxy S III, it has also created a fantastic mid-level device with its affordably-priced Galaxy Ace 2. Offering a stunning screen, great usability and a strong set of features it packs all that the average smartphone buyer will need. And while it's a shame that the latest version of Android isn't installed, you still get unbeatable value or money.

OS Android 2.3 Gingerbread
Processor 800MHz dual-core
Screen 3.8-inch
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 768MB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 0.3MP front-facing
Video 720p HD
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 118 x 62 x 11mm
Weight 119g
Battery 1,500 mAh

VERDICT: In terms of sheer bang for your buck, this great phone is one of the best.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆
FEATURES ★★★☆☆
USABILITY ★★★★☆
DESIGN ★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Samsung Galaxy Ace 3

Reviewed: March 2014, price: £180

www.samsung.com/uk

The Samsung Galaxy Ace 3 is a good handset that's been made irrelevant by cheaper competition. Whilst it packs a vibrant display and solid specs, similar phones sit well below the £180 benchmark set here. Samsung will have to rethink its pricing. If it weren't for the Moto G's release this would be an emphatic recommendation - unfortunately Samsung will have to settle for the silver medal.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz dual-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB/16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 121.2 x 62.7 x 9.8mm
Weight 115g
Battery 1,500 mAh

VERDICT: Premium build quality and visuals at a good price - just not a great one.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Samsung Galaxy K Zoom

Reviewed: October 2014, price: £400

www.samsung.com/uk

We can see what Samsung set out to achieve with the Galaxy K zoom, and creating a solid Android smartphone with an optical zoom is no small feat. However, it looks like a dated digital camera at best - newer devices are much more compact. If you're after a smartphone with a solid snapper, we'd advise you to seek out the LG G3 or Sony Xperia Z2 instead.

OS Android 4.4 (KitKat)
Processor Hexa-core: 1.3GHz quad-core + 1.7GHz dual-core
Screen 4.8 inches
Resolution 1,280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 2MP front
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 137.5 x 70.8 x 16.6mm
Weight 200g
Battery 2,430mAh

VERDICT: A decent smartphone and an excellent camera in a hideous body.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★☆☆☆☆

★★★☆☆

Samsung Galaxy Mega

Reviewed: October 2013, price: £440

www.samsung.com/uk

With a 6.3-inch screen, the Galaxy Mega falls into phablet territory, but that doesn't change the fact that said screen is hypnotically vibrant. As such, it's a great video player and has room for a sizeable battery. Its resolution, however, is a minor issue and it doesn't have enough internal storage to meet our needs. It will stick out like a sore thumb but you might just fall in love with it.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.7GHz quad-core
Screen 6.3 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8 MP rear-facing, 1.9 MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 167.6 x 88 x 8 mm
Weight 199g
Battery 3,200 mAh

VERDICT: For better or worse it's all about the big, vibrant screen with this handset.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Samsung Galaxy Note 3

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £649

www.samsung.com/uk

The Note 3 steps over the competition with its large, engulfing display and great battery life. But it's the stylus that's the star of the show here, with great integration that makes it an ideal Note-keeping device. This makes it ideal for business people on the move, although they'll have to make sure they keep an eye on the easy-to-lose pen at all times.

OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean
Processor 2.3GHz quad-core
Screen 5.7 inches
Resolution1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 16/32/64GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 13 MP front-facing, 2MP rear-facing
Video 4K
Dimensions 151.2 x 79.2 x 8.3 mm
Weight 168g
Battery 3,200 mAh

VERDICT: A fantastic portable business device with helpful, unique features.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Samsung Galaxy Note 4

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £498

www.samsung.com/uk

This year's effort ensures the Note remains top of the phablet pile, but unless you're particularly taken with the stylus and split-screen app combo, you shouldn't discount the latest flagship phones. The LG G3 and new Motorola Moto X are stunning devices, only slightly smaller in size and power. Unless you've got a thing for faux leather, that is, in which case the Note 4 is the best gadget ever made.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.7GHz quad-core
Screen 5.7 inches
Resolution 1,440 x 2,560-pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 16MP rear-facing, 3.7MP front-facing
Video 2160p at 30fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 153.5 x 78.6 x 8.5mm
Weight 176g
Battery 3,220mAh

VERDICT: Still king of the phablets, but not by such a distance this time around.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Samsung Galaxy Note Edge

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £610

www.samsung.com/uk

The Samsung Galaxy Note Edge points to an exciting future when we no longer have to accept that a smartphone screen has to be rectangular. As is often the case with a new technology, though, it needs more work. As cool as the edge looks, it serves little purpose, other than to make this a more expensive Note 4. Call us when the screen wraps all the way around, Samsung.

OS Android 4.4.4 KitKat
Processor Quad-core 2.7GHz Krait 450
Screen 5.6-inches
Resolution 1,600 x 2,560 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32/64GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 16MP rear-facing, 3.7MP front-facing
Video 4K @ 60fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 151.3 x 82.4 x 8.3mm
Weight 174g
Battery 3,000mAh

VERDICT: A worthwhile endeavour - for Samsung's engineers, not the consumer.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★☆☆

Samsung Galaxy S3

Reviewed: July 2012, price: £485

www.samsung.com/uk

Matching up to the mighty Galaxy S II was always going to be a tall order, but with the release of the Galaxy S III Samsung has clearly surpassed expectations. With its stunning design, amazing usability, high-powered performance and cutting-edge features, it measures up to the best of the competition and sets a new benchmark for its rivals. If you're looking for one of the best smartphones you can buy, this is it.

OS Android 4.0 Ice Cream Sandwich
Processor 1.4GHz ARM Cortex-A9
Screen 4.8 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16/32/64GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.9MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Size 137 x 71 x 9mm
Weight 133g
Battery 2,100 mAh

VERDICT: A masterpiece of design and usability. This is the benchmark to beat.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★★

Samsung Galaxy S3 Mini

Reviewed: January 2013, price: £300

www.samsung.com/uk

Something of a misnomer, this is no relation to its bigger brother, the S III,despite the design similarities. The Mini is little more than a shrunk down Galaxy S II. If users want a budget Galaxy, they are better off pursuring that (former) flagship on a budget plan - this is extortionately expensive for what you get.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor 1GHz dual-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 1GHz RAM
Storage 8/16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 0.3MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions: 121.6 x 63 x 9.9 mm
Weight 111.5g
Battery 1,500 mAh

VERDICT: A cheeky move by Samsung to pass this off as a premium device. It's not.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Samsung Galaxy S4

Reviewed: July 2012, price: £550

www.samsung.com/uk

An impressive hardware offering with intriguing new software and camera features but these need to be perfected and integrated into the device as a whole before the S4 can really be called a knock out. While the phone's processor seemed to struggle with games and the design is pretty similar to the S3, this is a solid offering from Samsung in the flagship race.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
CPU 1.6 GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 16/32/64GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Cameras 13MP front-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 136.6 x 69.8 x 7.9 mm
Weight 130g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: An impressive offering with interesting but not integrated new software.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Samsung Galaxy S4 Active

Reviewed: November 2013, price: £400

www.samsung.com/uk

The Active S4 is ideal for people looking for a more protected smartphone, although it does make some sacrifices. Its design is too rugged for mainstream appeal and its display and camera aren't great. But it's a great hybrid for an underwater camera and is perfect for adventurous lifestyles.

OS Android 4.2.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.9 GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 139.7 x 71.3 x 9.1 mm
Weight 151g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: It may not be quite as good as its big brother, but it certainly has its purpose.

PERFORMANCE	★★★½☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★☆☆☆

★★★☆☆

Samsung Galaxy S5

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £530

www.samsung.com/uk

The thing about Galaxy handsets is that their flaws are often matters of personal opinion. If you don't mind the samey design, plasticky build and irksome user interface, then the Galaxy S5 could be the best smartphone going. It's insanely powerful, has a blinding display and is even waterproof. If you care about substance over style then the Galaxy S5 is as good as it gets.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core
Screen 5.1 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16/32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 16MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 142 mm x 72.5 mm x 8.1 mm
Weight 145g
Battery 2,800mAh

VERDICT: Behind a cheap-looking build lies the beastliest smartphone around.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★½
DESIGN	★★★½☆

★★★★★

Samsung Galaxy S6 edge

Reviewed: June 2015, price: £760

www.samsung.com/uk

This is currently one of the best looking smartphones on the market. That dual-curved screen makes the iPhone 6 Plus and HTC One M9 look boring in comparison. An insanely fast camera and superb performance means that the Samsung Galaxy S6 edge isn't just about looks either.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor octa-core Samsung Exynos 7420
Screen 5.1-inches
Resolution 1,440 x 2,560
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 64GB/128GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Rear camera 16MP
Front camera 5MP
Video 4K
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 142.11 x 70.1 x 7 mm
Weight 132g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: A phone that grabs attention with both its looks and performance.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Sony Xperia L

Reviewed: August 2013, price: £249

www.sonymobile.com

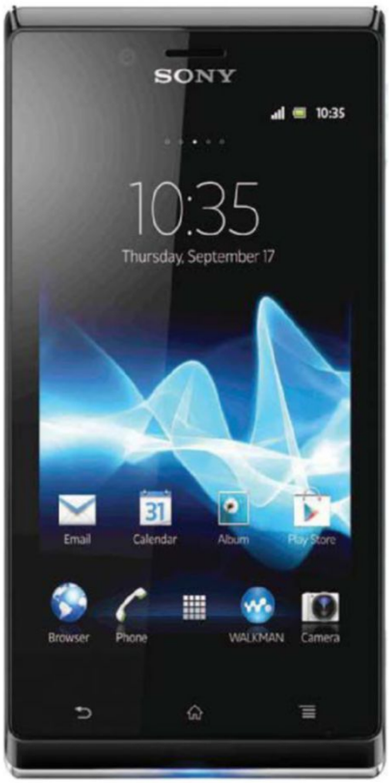
This device includes some higher end specs for a low cost handset as well as a snappy camera, a high quality screen and impressive battery life. However, the odd design choices are a distraction and the screen does suffer from lag issues. Lower cost devices like the Nokia 620 offer more at a cheaper price. Access to the Google Play store potentially gives it an edge over the 620, if that's what you're after.

Dimensions 128.7x 65 x 9.7mm, 137g
Display 4.3 inch, TFT capacitive touchscreen, 480x854 pixels, 228 ppi
OS Android 4.1
CPU Qualcomm MSM8230 Snapdragon dual core 1GHz
GPU Adreno 305
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB, microSD up to 32GB
Wireless Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n
Camera 8MP, autofocus, LED flash
Battery Up to 9 hours (3G) - accurate

VERDICT: Not a bad choice for gamers on a budget, but for others there are better handsets.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★☆☆☆

★★★☆☆



Sony Xperia J

Reviewed: February 2013, price: £149

www.sonymobile.com

The Xperia J is expensive for what you get - no small feat considering it costs £149. This is a severely stripped down version of its big brothers, the Xperia P, T and S. Its performance is poor, the camera and screen is poor. You'd do much better buying last gen's flagship phones on a contract, rather than buying this weak cut price performer. Avoid.

Dimensions 120.5 x 63 x 10.28 mm
OS Windows Phone 8
Screen 4.0-inch S-LCD
Resolution 480x800
Processor Qualcomm Snapdragon S4 1GHz dual-core
GPU Adreno 305
RAM 512MB
Storage 4GB expandable via microSD
Cameras 5MP rear, LED flash / 720p HD video
Wireless Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 3.1, a-GPS and GLONASS
Ports Micro USB, 3.5mm audio
Battery life 1,700mAh

VERDICT: A bit of a rip off for a low spec, poor performing phone.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★☆☆☆

★★☆☆☆

Sony Xperia SP

Reviewed: July 2013, price: £290

www.sonymobile.com

The Xperia SP has an excellent high definition screen, a fairly solid battery life and an interesting notification system involving a panel at the bottom of the phone which lights up with customisable colours when you get a message. However the phone's not as powerful as last year's flagships, is slightly bulky and there are rival phones to be had for less money, particularly if you're not fussed about 4G.

OS Android 4.1
Screen 4.6inch / 720x1280 pixels
Input Capacitive touchscreen
Camera 8MP, VGA front
Video Record / Playback
Audio Music player / Stereo Bluetooth / 3.5mm jack
Memory 8GB expandable via micro SD card
Battery 2370mAh

VERDICT: If 4G LTE isn't for you, the Xperia SP isn't quite the bargain it first seems.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Sony Xperia T3

Reviewed: July 2013, price: £290

www.sonymobile.com

If it weren't for the existence of the Sony Xperia T2 Ultra, released less than nine months prior, the T3 would be a solid recommendation. It's a highly satisfactory smartphone with a premium build - but without anybody who would really need to buy it.

OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat
Processor 1.4GHz quad-core
Screen 5.3 inches
Resolution 1,280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.1MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 150.7 x 77 x 7mm
Weight 148g
Battery 2,500mAh

VERDICT: A solid effort makes it a viable mid-range phablet choice.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★½☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★½

★★★★☆

Sony Xperia Z

Reviewed: April 2013, price: £499

www.sonymobile.com

Sony's smartphone is a powerhouse in every way, let down only by some unusual design decisions. Water, dust and shock resistant, it's giant screen size will come down to personal preference, as will its unusual design. Otherwise it has all of Sony's bells and whistles, including some clever use of NFC with NFCs stereos, TVs and laptops.

Dimensions 139 x 71 x 7.9 mm and 146g
OS Android 4.1.2 (Jelly Bean).
Screen 5 inch, Capacitive touchscreen,1080 x 1920
Processor Qualcomm Krait quad-core 1.5 GHz
RAM 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB, microSD (to 32GB)
Cameras Main 13.1 MP, 4128x3096 pixels, autofocus, LED flash. Front - 2.2 MP, 1080p@30fps
Wireless Wi-Fi 802.11, Bluetooth 4.0, NFC enabled
Ports MicroUSB v2.0, MicroSD, 3.5mm audio jack.
Battery Li-Ion 2330 mAh battery

VERDICT: A powerhouse phone, let down only by some design niggles.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Sony Xperia Z1

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £475

www.sonymobile.com

It's a little on the large side, but Sony's latest handset is rock solid, with powerful hardware and a unique design. Fans of the company will be right at home with the software that stores movies, music and games you've bought across other platforms. Add in a great camera and you've got a phone that stops just short of best in class.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor Snapdragon 800 quad-core 2.2GHz
Screen 1080 x 1920 pixels, 5 inches
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB expandable up to 64GB via micro SD
Camera 20.7 MP rear-facing, 2 MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Wireless Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 4.0
Ports micro SD, microUSB
Battery 3000 mAh
Dimensions 144 x 74 x 8.5mm
Weight 170g

VERDICT: Software makes it great for Sony fans, hardware makes it good for the rest

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Sony Xperia Z1 Compact

Reviewed: March 2014, price: £449

www.sonymobile.com

If you hate giant displays and don't have the patience for Apple's iOS and its restrictive App Store, the Sony Xperia Z1 Compact your only choice, and a great one at that. Sony have done well to make a phone with the power to rival the mighty iPhone in an equally small package. In-built Sony-branded apps such as Walkman and PlayStation is an inherent plus, too. Fingers crossed for a KitKat 4.4 upgrade soon.

OS Android 4.3
Processor Qualcomm Snapdragon 800
Screen 4.3-inch HD Triluminos
Resolution 720 x 1,280 pixels
Memory 2GB
Storage 16GB, expandable to 64GB
Camera 20.7MP Exmor RS
Video 720p
Connectivity Wi-Fi, 3G, 4G, Bluetooth 4.0, NFC
Dimensions 127 x 64.9 x 9.5mm
Weight 137g
Battery 2,300 mAh

VERDICT: The most powerful, best looking compact Android available. Simple.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★★

Sony Xperia Z2

Reviewed: July 2014, price: £579

www.sonymobile.com

The Z2 matches its rivals' power and usability. A lack of design innovation and similar specs might deter Z1 owners from upgrading, though, and the large size might not appeal to fans of smaller devices. That said, superior imagin and a powerful processor and CPU means it excels in the right places.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.3GHz quad-core
Screen 5.2 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 2.2MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 146.8 x 73.3 x 8.2mm
Weight 163g
Battery 3,200mAh

VERDICT: An immaculate smartphone, if only a small step up from its predecessor.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★½
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Sony Xperia Z3

Reviewed: December 2014, price: £549

www.sonymobile.com

We were all a little bit surprised when Sony elected to release a new flagship a matter of months after the Xperia Z2 hit shelves. After reviewing it though, the company's reasoning is obvious. The Z3 is a true flagship as worthy of your attention (and cash) as any other in this Buyer's Guide. The Z3 has premium design, hugely powerful internals, and an array of neat features. A very impressive device.

OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core
Screen 5.2 inches
Resolution 1,920 x 1,080 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 2.2MP front-facing
Video 4K
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 146 x 72 x 7.3mm
Weight 152g
Battery 3,100mAh

VERDICT: Sony's best full-sized offering yet, although the camera is aging a little now.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Sony Xperia Z3 Compact

Reviewed: December 14, price: £429

www.sonymobile.com

The Xperia Z3 Compact is indisputably the most powerful compact Android ever made. We can't really slight it for anything, and no other Android phone in its size bracket can come close to matching it. It's remarkable that Sony has managed to squeeze almost the exact same technology from the Z3 into a smaller body. Finally, Android power-users have a valid option in the sub-five inch display category.

OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core
Screen 4.6 inches
Resolution 1,280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 2.2MP front-facing
Video 4K
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 127 x 64.9 x 8.6mm
Weight 129g
Battery 2,600mAh

VERDICT: The definitive small-sized Android smartphone. The most powerful yet.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Vodafone Smart 4 Power

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £79

www.vodafone.co.uk

The benchmark scores of a £79 phone were never going to impress anyone: the Smart 4 Power is not a handset for playing the latest taxing games on. That said, it's enough to deliver on the advantages of 4G. If instant information rather than instant gratification is what you're after, this phone delivers for the price.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.3GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 540 x 960
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 4GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 141 x 71.4 x 9.5mm
Weight 162g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: Poor specs distract from what is an ergonomic and capable 4G starter.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Yezz Andy A5

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £207

www.sayyezz.com

Camera phone fans on a tight budget should definitely seek out the Andy A5 for its affordable price and high-quality camera. If taking photos is not that important to you then you'll probably have seen the uninspired design and bland features a million times before.

OS Android 4.2 (Jelly Bean)
Processor Quad-core 1.2GHz
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 540 x 960 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Connectivity 3G, wi-fi
Dimensions 144.1 x 73.5 x 8.6mm
Weight 106g
Battery 2,000mAh

VERDICT: A great camera, but the rest struggles against more bullish counterparts.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★½☆☆
DESIGN	★★☆☆☆

★★★☆☆

YotaPhone 2

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £549
www.yotaphone.com/gb-en/

The YotaPhone 2 fixes almost all of the original's flaws, and turns the rear E Ink display from an impractical cherry on top, to one of the phone's main ingredients. There's no denying this quirky conversation-starter is for a niche audience, and a rich one at that. We can't wait to see what the YotaPhone 3 will bring - not least a price drop for this model.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor Quad-core 2.3GHz Krait 400
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1,080 x 1,920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2.1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 144 x 69.5 x 8.9mm
Weight 145g
Battery 2,500mAh

VERDICT: If you're constantly reading on the go this is the best new smartphone in years.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

ZTE Blade Vec 4G

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £153
www.ztedevices.co.uk

Once you've fixed all the software customisations present on the Vec 4G, you're left with a pretty respectable performer for the price. The large, sharp display does a great job of quickly rendering web pages over 4G, Unfortunately, the Vec 4G battery's small capacity and demanding hardware mean you'll often find the phone emptied by the end of the day. It also has storage issues - namely no SD card slot.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 142.3 x 70.4 x 7.8mm
Weight 155g
Battery 2,300 mAh

VERDICT: Solid specs for 4G at a reasonable price, but there are better options out there.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

ZTE Blade V

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £99.99
www.ztedevices.co.uk

A fantastic price makes the ZTE Blade V easy to recommend for first-time buyers. Anyone hoping to get the most out of a smartphone's apps and snaps should look elsewhere, but if you don't want to worry about a phone for the kids being broken or stolen, then this is your guy.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor Snapdragon S4 Play
Screen 480 x 800, 4 inches
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 4GB
Camera 5 MP
Video Yes
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 126 x 64 x 10.9 mm
Weight 130g
Battery 1,800 mAh

VERDICT: A great prices makes this worthwhile for first-time buyers.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Amazon Kindle Fire HD 8.9"

Reviewed: May 2013, price: £229/259

www.amazon.co.uk

A good looking e-reader with tablet capabilities, limited by Amazon's annoying operating system and app eco-system, and an annoyingly slow browser. This device will doubtless be a commercial success, with its branding and ease of use, but for the more serious user there are much better tablets out there.

Dimensions 240 x 164 x 8.8 mm
OS Customized Android 4.0
Screen 8.9 inch IPS LCD capacitive touchscreen
Resolution 1920 x 1200, 254 ppi
Processor TI OMAP 4470 dual-core 1.5 GHz Cortex-A9
GPU PowerVR SGX544
RAM 1 GB RAM
Storage 16 GB/32 GB
Cameras front facing 1.3MP with 720p video
Wireless 802.11 a/b/g/n, dual-band
Ports USB 2.0, 3.5mm audio jacks, Bluetooth A2DP
Battery life 10 hours (accurate)

VERDICT: A solid, functional tablet which is limited by its Amazon associations.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★☆☆

Acer Iconia Tab 8

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £140

www.amazon.co.uk

Acer has managed to do what manufacturers of every cheap tablet should aspire to: create a tablet that is priced extremely competitively, but which performs to a standard much higher than you'd expect for its cost. A few compromises have been made along the way, but this is still a budget slab that's well worth considering.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.3GHz quad-core
Screen 8 inches
Resolution 1,280 x 800 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB/32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 32GB
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity Wi-fi only
Dimensions 215 x 130 x 8.5mm
Weight 360g
Battery 4,600mAh

VERDICT: It has a few flaws, but for less than £150 you should look past them.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Advent Vega Tegra Note 7

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £140

www.nvidia.co.uk

It's a contender, alright. Aside from some clunky desing issues, the Advent Vega Tegra Note 7 is a powerful and punchy little machine. If you're after a compact and affordable tablet its speed sets it aside from its rivals as a device that's great for gaming, customising images and browsing the web.

OS Android Jelly Bean 4.3
Processor Nvidia Tegra 4
Screen 7 inches
Resolution 1,280 x 800 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Connectivity Wi-fi, Bluetooth 4.0
Dimensions 119 x 199 x 9.6mm
Weight 320g
Battery 8 hours

VERDICT: Its speed sets it apart from its competition. A cheap and capable device.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★☆☆☆

★★★☆☆

Amazon Kindle Fire HDX

Reviewed: January 2014, price: £199-329
www.amazon.co.uk/kindle

The Kindle Fire HDX is around £100 more than the Fire but the improved screen and processor justifies the extra cost. The real human Help feature will be a boon to tablet newbies; experienced users will regard it as a gimmick. The HDX is a top-rate device – but if you're not a regular Amazon customer you're better off with a Nexus.

OS Amazon customised Android OS, v4.1.2
PROCESSOR Snapdragon 800 2.2GHz quad-core
SCREEN 1902 x 1200 pixels, 7 inches
MEMORY 2GB RAM
STORAGE 16GB, 32GB, 64GB versions available
CAMERA 8MP front-facing
VIDEO 720HD
WIRELESS Wi-fi (optional Vodafone 4G version)
PORTS microUSB
DIMENSIONS 131.8 x 66.9 x 9.9 mm
WEIGHT 302g

VERDICT: A significant update to the Fire and ideal for Amazon users.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Apple iPad Mini

Reviewed: December 2012, price: £269
www.apple.com/uk

The iPad Mini represents Apple playing it safe, which is to say:, disappointing. This is little more than an iPad 2, with all its limitations - a low res screen and weak processor power - shrunk down to an odd 7.9-inch size. It is also overpriced, the Google Nexus 7 offers superior performance for £100 less. Despite its luxurious design, you really are paying for little more than 4G support, and Apple's App Store. Average.

OS iOS 6.0.1
Screen 7.9-inch LED-backlit IPS LCD
Resolution 768 x 1024 pixels at 162 pixels per inch
Input Capacitive touchscreen
CPU Apple A5 1GHz dual core
GPU PowerVR SGX543MP2
Memory 512MB
Storage 16/32/64GB
Camera 5MP rear facing, 1.2MP front facing
Video 1920x1080 (1080P HD) at 30fps. Video stabilised
Wireless Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n, dual-band, Bluetooth 4.0
Ports 3.5mm audio jack, Apple Lightning port (USB 2.0)
Size 200 x 134.7 x 7.2mm
Weight 308g

VERDICT: Little more than a shrunken iPad 2 with 4G. Disappointing.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★☆☆

Apple iPad 3

Reviewed: April 2012, price: £399
www.apple.com/uk

The new iPad boasts the highest-resolution display of any tablet, as well as an improved 5MP camera and better connectivity. Not to mention a high-powered new processor which makes it the most powerful iPad ever, too. Though some may resist the upgrade path, the unrivalled Retina display is a subtle but deeply appealing feature which will become more and more desirable. The new iPad is by far the best tablet around

OS iOS 5
Screen 9.7-inch TFT
Resolution 1536 x 2048 pixels
Input Capacitive touchscreen
Processor 1GHz Cortex-A9
Memory 1GB
Storage 16/32/64GB
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 0.3MP front-facing
Flash No
Video 1080p HD
Wireless 802.11a/b/g/n Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 4.0
Ports 3.5mm audio jack, proprietary Apple connector
Standby time 720 hours
Use time 9 hours
Size 241 x 186 x 9mm
Weight 662g

VERDICT: There's simply no contest - the new iPad is the best tablet in the world.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Apple iPad 4

Reviewed: January 2013, price: £399

www.apple.com/uk

A rather cheeky move by Apple to release the iPad 4 (or 'iPad with Retina Display') just months after the iPad 3. All it really adds is a new processor (the iPhone 5's A6X) and Apple's new lightning connector. However, this means it remains as the best tablet money can buy - and Apple's App Store and its 300,000 dedicated tablet apps only make the proposition more enticing.

OS iOS 6.0.1,
Screen 9.7 inch LED
Resolution 1536 x 2048 pixels at 264 ppi pixel density
CPU Apple A6X, Dual-core
GPU PowerVR SGX554MP4,
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16/32/64 GB storage
Camera 5MP rear facing, 1.2MP front facing
Video 1080P HD at 30fps
Wireless Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n, Bluetooth 4.0
Cellular 4G, 3G, 2G
Ports Lightning Connector (USB2.0) and 3.5mm audio jack,
Dimensions 241.2 x 185.7 x 9.4 mm
Weight 662 g

VERDICT: The best tablet money can buy.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Archos 79 Platinum

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £150

www.archos.com

With so many budget tablets to choose from the Archos 79 Platinum has no features or unique selling points to attract the consumer in a saturated market. Its hardware is woefully underpowered, its features are bog standard and it is at least £10 too expensive. Its attractive looks are not enough to redeem it. The bottom line is that it should have never been conceived.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor Quad-core A9 1.6GHz
Screen 7.85 inches
Resolution 1,024 x 768 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Camera 2MP rear-facing
Connectivity Wi-fi, Bluetooth
Dimensions 201 x 137 x 8mm
Weight 366g
Battery Lithium Polymer

VERDICT: There is no reason you ever would, or should, buy it. Avoid, avoid, avoid.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★☆☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★☆☆☆☆

Archos 101 XS 2

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £250

www.archos.com

A couple of years ago, the 101 XS would have has us singing Archos' praises, but by today's standards its processing power and screen quality fall short. It might, though, find a home with users limited to spending £250 on a 10-inch tablet

OS Android 4.2.2
SCREEN 10.1-inch/1,280 x 800 pixels
CAMERA 2MP rear, 2MP front
VIDEO Record/playback
AUDIO Music player/3.5mm jack
MEMORY 16GB expandable via microSD
DIMENSIONS 273 x 169 x 10.1mm (tablet), 273 x 169 x 5mm (keyboard)
WEIGHT 636g (tablet), 200g (keyboard)

VERDICT: A great price is let down by a poor screen and cheap build.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Asus Transformer Pad TF701T

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £429

www.asus.com

The Asus Transformer Pad TF701T packs a beautiful screen and the keyboard dock is well thought out. But dated software and the threat of a Google Nexus 10 sequel make this a niche device. Do you really need a keyboard? The iPad mini begs to differ.

OS Android 4.3 (via an over-the-air update)
SCREEN 10.1-inch/2,560 x 1,600 pixels
INPUT Capacitive touchscreen
CAMERA 5MP rear, 1.2MP front
VIDEO Record/playback
AUDIO Music player/3.5mm jack
MEMORY 32/64GB
BATTERY Tablet 31Wh, dock 16Wh

VERDICT: It packs fast hardware but can't compete with the iPad Air or Nexus range

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Asus VivoPad

Reviewed: October 2013, price: £399

www.asus.com

This delivers on the promise of a being a Windows 8 PC in tablet form, with access to powerful apps like Photoshop. Managing this on a 10-inch tablet is no small feat. That said, the Intel Atom processor keeps it from reaching its full potential, struggling with many of the things you would want to use a PC for. The lack of storage hinders it further.

OS Windows 8
Processor Intel Atom Z2760 dual-core
Screen 10.1-inch (1366 x 768 pixels) IPS display
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 64GB SSD
Camera 8 MP rear-facing, 2 MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 4.0
Ports Micro HDMI, Micro SD, Micro USB
Dimensions 262.5 x 171 x 9.7 mm
Weight 580g
Battery Li-Po 6,760 mAH

VERDICT: A good attempt at making a PC tablet, but too underpowered.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★☆☆

Google Nexus 9

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £319

www.google.co.uk/nexus

The Google Nexus 9 is an impressive and welcome return to the tablet market for HTC, and a jewel of a gadget for Android 5.0 to debut on. The size is right, and if you know for sure you want an Android tablet, it's your best bet - it's certainly the best slate HTC has ever made - but for the money we'd still go for the quality build and thriving eco-system of an iPad.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Screen 8.9-inch
Resolution 2048 x 1536 pixels
Processor Tegra K1 2.3GHz
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB/32GB internal
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.6MP front-facing
Flash No
Video 1080p HD
Dimensions 153.68mm x 228.25mm x 7.95mm
Weight 425g
Battery 6,700 mAh

VERDICT: The best tablet on the market - if you insist on Android, that is.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Google Nexus 10

Reviewed: February 2013, price: £319
www.google.co.uk/nexus

Finally, the Android tablet everyone's been waiting for - except Apple. This is a tablet that can go head to head with the best in the Apple iPad stable - it has a powerful processor, a Retina Display quality screen, the latest version of Android. Along with the Nexus 7, this is the best tablet Android users can buy. The only flaws are an uninspired body, and a dearth of tablet specific apps.

OS Android 4.2 (Jelly Bean)
Dimensions 263.9 x 177.6 x 8.9 mm, 603g
Screen 10-inch
Resolution 2560 x 1600 pixels
Input Super PLS TFT capacitive touch-screen
CPU Exynos 5, Dual-core ARM Cortex-A15
RAM 2 GB
Cameras 5 MP (main), 1.9 MP (front)
Wireless Wi-Fi, Bluetooth
NFC Android Beam
Storage 16 GB/32 GB
Connectivity Micro USB, Micro HDMI, 3.5mm headphone jack
Battery 9,000 mAh

VERDICT: The best Android tablet of 2013 slips behind the iPad only due to apps.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★★

HP Slate 7

Reviewed: October 2013, price: £125
www.hp.com

The steel frame makes the Slate 7 an impressive sight and its audio uses Beats technology to great effect. The fantastic price will help it to undercut some of its rivals, though the slow processor and low quality camera keep it from besting them elsewhere.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor Dual-core 1.6 GHz Cortex-A9
Screen 600 x 1024 pixels, 7.0 inches
Memory 1 GB RAM
Storage 8 GB expandable to 32GB via SD card
Camera 3.15 MP pixel rear facing, VGA front facing
Video 720p
Dimensions 197.1 x 116.1 x 10.7 mm
Weight 372 g
Battery non-removable, 5h media time

VERDICT: Great audio and build, but corners have been cut to keep costs down.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★☆☆☆

Lenovo ThinkPad 8

Reviewed: September 2014, price: £424
www.lenovo.com

If you just want a device for general tasks then you can find better alternatives within Lenovo's Yoga range of Android slates, and elsewhere. If you're a fan of Windows and in search of a bulkier device that offers plenty of productivity tools, then the ThinkPad is an (almost) viable option.

OS Windows 8.1
Processor 2.4GHz quad-core
Screen 8.3 inches
Resolution 1,200 x 1,920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2.2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 8.83 x 5.2 x 0.35 inches
Weight 439g

VERDICT: Even with so few Windows tablets available the ThinkPad still fails to stand out.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★½☆☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★☆☆

Lenovo Miix 2

Reviewed: July 2014, price: £255
www.microsoft.com/surface

With solid performance across the board, frequently usable built-in apps and compact size the Miix 2 is a small but surprisingly versatile slate. Despite the limitations that come with the Windows OS, it performs general tasks well and, for the price, won't let you down. With 3G capability you can even connect to the internet on the move. Overall, it offers plenty of pleasant surprises to combat the weaknesses of its OS.

OS Windows 8.1
Processor 1.3GHz quad-core
Screen 8 inches
Resolution 1280 x 800 pixels
Memory 2GB
Storage 32GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 8.3 x 215.6 x 131mm
Weight 350g
Battery 4,730mAh

VERDICT: A small but substantial Windows offering that still trails its Android rivals.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★½☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Lenovo Yoga Tablet 2

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £249
www.lenovo.com

Lenovo certainly deserves credit for trying to break the 'black slab' mould. It's an interesting attempt at something different, but unless you have a real need to hang it up from the ceiling or to perch it upright on a train table every day its mediocre internals and display don't represent that much value for money.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.86GHz quad-core
Screen 10.1inches
Resolution 1920 x 1200 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 64GB
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.6MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 4G optional
Dimensions 255 x 183 x 7.2 mm
Weight 619g
Battery 9,600 mAh

VERDICT: A nice idea, but one we don't fully buy into. Not quite up to scratch.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Microsoft Surface 2 Pro

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £720
www.microsoft.com/surface

We can't fault Microsoft's ambition for the powerful Surface Pro 2 to become your all-in-one portable work and play device. It's got a great display and solid hardware but a lack of dedicated apps, software compromises and stiff - cheaper-competition make it a tough sell.

OS Windows 8.1
Screen 10.6 inches/1,920x1,080 pixels
Input Capacitive touchscreen
Camera 720p-resolution front and rear
Video Record/playback
Audio Music player/3.5mm jack
Memory 64GB / 128GB / 256GB / 512GB
Battery 48Wh

VERDICT: Price holds back what is an otherwise excellent work/play hybrid.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Microsoft Surface Pro 3

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £640
www.microsoft.com/surface

From software to hardware and even design the Surface Pro 3 is a wonderful piece of kit. It's refreshing to come across a tablet with grander ideals than the norm, challenging us to rethink the notion of the medium. For most people this could genuinely replace their laptop. It's just a shame, and an almost inexcusable mistake, that the keyboard which is so integral to its function is sold as an expensive extra.

OS Windows 8.1
Processor 1.5GHz Intel core i3/2.9GHz Intel core i5/3.7GHz Intel core i7
Screen 12 inches
Resolution 2,160 x 1,440 pixels
Memory 4GB/8GB RAM
Storage 64GB/128GB/256GB/512GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity Wi-fi only
Dimensions 292.1mm x 201.4mm x 9.1mm
Weight 800g
Battery 42Wh

VERDICT: The first tablet with enough function to conceivably replace a laptop.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★½☆
DESIGN	★★★★½

★★★★★

Nokia Lumia 2520

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £399
www.nokia.com

The Windows-run Lumia 2520 is a decent first effort from Nokia - and it's certainly one of the more attractive and solid pieces of tablet hardware on the market. It has a few issues with the weight and a lackluster camera but overall we have no trouble recommending this to Windows 8.1 and Lumia fans.

OS Windows 8.1
Screen 10.1 inches, 1,920 x 1,080 pixels, 218PPI
Processor Qualcomm Snapdragon 800
Memory 2GB
Camera 6.7MP with Carl Zeiss lens
Audio Music player/3.5mm jack
Dimensions 168 x 267 x 8.9mm, 615g
Battery 8120 mAh

VERDICT: A rock solid first effort from Nokia in this market with powerful specs.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Samsung Galaxy Tab 3 Kids

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £250
www.nokia.com

The Tab 3 Kids is surprisingly robust, with a solid camera, great battery, fantastic educational apps and software to suit kids. But the premium design doesn't feel like it was meant to be enjoyed by young users and we'd suggest going with a company that specialises in the market rather than one that's testing it out.

OS Android 4.1
Processor Dual-core 1.2GHz
Screen 600 x 1,024 pixels, 7 inches
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB/16GB, expandable up to 64GB
Camera 3.15MP (back), 1.3MP (front)
Video 720p@30fps
Wireless WiFi, Bluetooth 3.0
Ports micro-USB, microSD
Dimensions 188 x 111.1 x 9.9mm
Weight 306g
Battery Li-Ion 4,000 mAh

VERDICT: A little too premium for the market it's aimed at.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★☆☆☆

★★★☆☆

Samsung Galaxy Tab S

Reviewed: October 2014, price: £319

www.samsung.com/uk

While the Tab S may not be a radical departure from other Android tablets, it encompasses everything that is great about a top-notch Samsung product. It's enough to rebuild the Korean giant's brand image, and proof that the company can still surprise us with a fantastic all-round product.

OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat
Processor 2.3GHz quad-core
Screen 8.4 inches
Resolution 2,560 x 1,600 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 16GB, 32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2.1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 125.6 x 212.8 x 6.6mm
Weight 294g
Battery 4,900mAh

VERDICT: Simply put, it's the best Android tablet on the market.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★½
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★★

Samsung Galaxy Note Pro 12.2

Reviewed: May 2014, price: £649

www.samsung.com/uk

One of the biggest displays ever seen on a tablet - at no detriment to quality. Combine that with solid design and a super powerful processor to run loads of unique applications and the NotePRO 12.2 is arguably the best tablet on the market. It's certainly the best Android slate, although it's definitely priced as such.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor Octa-core (1.9GHz + 1.3GHz quad)
Screen 12.2 inches
Resolution 2,560 x 1,600 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB/64GB
Camera 8MP rear/2MP front-facing
Video 1,080p Full HD
Connectivity Wi-fi only
Dimensions 295.6 x 204 x 7.95mm
Weight 750g
Battery 9,500mAh

VERDICT: Big, beautiful, functional and priced to match. Android's finest.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★½
FEATURES	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★½
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Sony Xperia Z2 Tablet

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £399

www.sony.co.uk

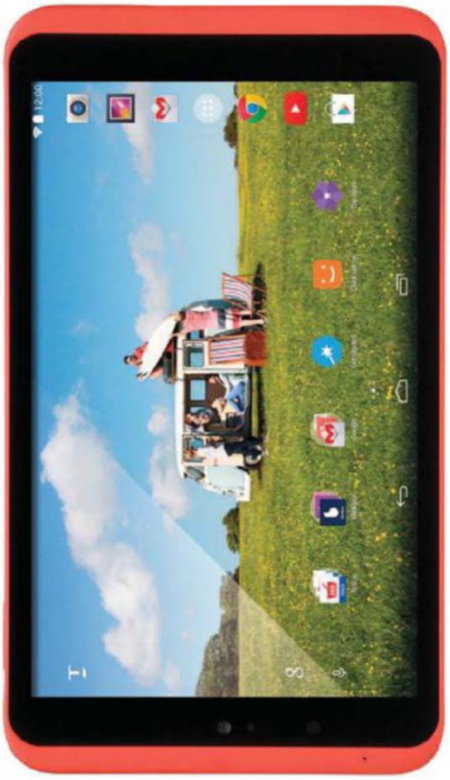
If looks could kill, Sony murdered the competition. Add to that a powerful processor and decent screen size and you have a great new addition to the high-end tablet market. Innovative features like dust and water resistance are impressive too, and manage to make up the expensive price tag.

OS Android OS v4.4.2 (KitKat)
Screen 10.1 inches
Processor Quad-core 2.3 GHz
Memory 3GB
Storage 16GB, microSD up to 64GB
Camera 8.1MP rear, 2.2MP front
Battery 6,000mAh
Network Wi-fi connectivity, 4G LTE

VERDICT: A good all-round tablet, with looks that set it apart from the rest of the flagships.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★½
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★☆



Tesco Hudl 2

Reviewed: January 2015, price: £129
www.tesco.com/direct/hudl

This is no Tesco Value attempt at a tablet. Make no mistake, the Hudl 2 is a fantastic Android slate that's great value for money. Sure, it's not on the cutting edge like Google's Nexus series of devices, but if all you want is a gadget to casually surf the web, watch some films or read a few comics, this device is every bit as capable as an iPad mini.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.83GHz quad-core
Screen 8.3 inches
Resolution 1,920 x 1,200 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video 720p at 30fps
Connectivity Wi-fi
Dimensions 224 x 128 x 9mm
Weight 410g
Battery 4,900mAh

VERDICT: Don't be fooled - Tesco is now a serious contender in the tablet space.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Toshiba Excite Pure

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £250
www.toshiba.co.uk

The Toshiba Excite Pure's £250 price is attractive but its display is far too faded. It means apps and the like don't look very good. It might appeal to families looking for a cheap way to keep the kids entertained but little else. Even so, the slow processor and useless apps force us to recommend you look elsewhere.

OS Android v4.2 (Jelly Bean)
Processor Nvidia Tegra 3
Memory 1GB
Storage 16GB
Screen 1280 x 800 pixels, 10.1 inches
Video HD
Audio Stereo
Dimensions 261.6 x 177.8 x 10.2mm

VERDICT: It's got a cheap price tag but the poor display and tech shows why.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★☆☆☆
DESIGN	★★☆☆☆

★★☆☆☆

Vodafone Smart Tab 4G

Reviewed: June 2015, price: £125
www.vodafone.co.uk

Attractive, cheap and feature-packed; the Vodafone Smart Tab 4G looks more upmarket than its affordable £125 pricing suggests. It's let down by a slow processor, but that shouldn't put you off what is basically well-designed and ideal family tablet.

OS Android KitKat 4.4
Processor 1.2 GHz Quad-Core
Screen 8.0-inches
Resolution 1280x800-pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 64GB
Rear camera 5MP
Front camera 2MP
Connectivity GSM/EDGE/3G/4G/HSPA+/LTE
Dimensions 209 x 128 x 7.99mm
Weight 309g
Battery 4060 mAh

VERDICT: An affordable and easy-to-use tablet that offers something for everyone.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Asus ZenWatch

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £204
www.asus.com/uk/

The Asus ZenWatch is handsome enough, but fails to stand out from the crowd of Android Wear devices. Google's wearable OS still feels like a solution in search of a problem - unless you have a specific use in mind for its features you may want to hold out for the next generation of deviecs.

VERDICT: Attractive, but with too many caveats to recommend outright.

Fitbit Flex

Reviewed: August 2014, price: £79.99
www.fitbit.com

Minor niggles aside, the Fitbit Flex is possibly the best fitness wearable on the market. Its features are so diverse, and its app so beautiful and intuitive, that it can be tailored to just about anyone's lifestyle. With interchangeable bands in a variety of colours, and a low price, the Flex is practically a must-buy.

VERDICT: A fantastic companion app and great functionality put the Flex on top.

LG G Watch R

Reviewed: May 2015, price: £180.00
www.jawbone.com

The LG G Watch R may be one of the most mature-looking smartwatches yet, but not everyone will find it attractive – or appreciate Android Wear's limitations. The market's set to explode with the advent of the Apple Watch and the Pebble Time. Unless you're desperate for what the LG G Watch R does right now, it's hard to see the value in yet another second-generation Android Wear watch.

VERDICT: Although attractive, it has limited functionality compared to other smartwatches.

Nike+ Fuelband SE

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £89
www.nike.com

The Nike+ FuelBand SE is close to being the perfect sports tracker. It's social capabilities combined with its numerous features to keep you motivated ensure that it will be a permanent mainstay in any gym addicts kit bag. You might not be so keen on wearing it every single day, though, with its appealing design being more clearly tailored to a casual setting. Plus, its lack of waterproofing could be a deal-breaker for some.

VERDICT: When it comes to fitness, Nike is a name you can trust - this is no exception.

★★★★☆

Samsung Galaxy Gear 2

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £250
www.samsung.com

The design needs a rethink but the Samsung Galaxy Gear 2 provides decent fitness tracking features and a good music player. Trimming down on other functions, however, would have made for a slimmer and sleeker product. It would be unfair to say this is a needless addition as it packs a lot of functions, but it's an expensive product that's hindered by an impractical design and redundant features.

VERDICT: A decent effort that has since been eclipsed by superior Android Wear devices.

★★★☆☆

Sony Smartband SWR10

Reviewed: September 2014, price: £80
www.sony.com

A mishmash of features means that the SWR10 occupies an odd space in the wearable tech world. But at least it is a space all of its own. No similar device can offer you all of the features of the SWR10, though that's irrelevant if those features don't suit your needs.
On the plus side, a large number of the SWR10's drawbacks are with its partner app, and apps can always be improved.

VERDICT: Potential to be a serious contender, but a hard sell for most in its current state.

★★★☆☆

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